

# MASTER THESIS REPORT

Alleviating tourist pressure from Amsterdam city  
centre by alternative food tourism in the  
neighbourhoods.

Including a comparative study with Rome.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Planning for sustainability in cities is a complex task in times of neoliberal economies pursuing ever-lasting growth rather than sustainable levels of developments. Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the world, but it is to a large extent a self-organized activity controlled by tourist demand. As a result of the boom in city tourism, cities around the globe are faced with problems caused by the large amounts of visitors that diminish the quality of life in a city. Consequently, the WTO argues that managing the increasing number of tourists arriving to cities in a sustainable and responsible way should be that the number one issue in tourism planning. Given this call, it is surprising that there has been little research carried out on planning measures that address the problem of carrying capacity for tourism. Therefore, there is a need for identifying alternatives to mass tourism in cities that can serve as examples of good practice and inspiration. This paper aims to partly fill this gap by exploring whether alternative food is a theme that fosters dispersion of tourists in cities. This study offers a counter-hegemonic and imaginative way of addressing the problem of tourism pressure in cities, exemplified by Amsterdam and Rome. It takes as a starting point the various possibilities and benefits of multifunctional urban agriculture and the popularity of alternative food networks and the slow food movement in cities. Alternative food increasingly attracts the interest of tourists and provides an opportunity to distract tourists away from the city centre. This finding points to the potential of using alternative food as an incentive for tourism dispersion strategies. Moreover, with alternative food tourism, a whole range of sustainability-oriented goals can be achieved in relation to healthy society, green cities, strong local economy and community empowerment.

**Keywords:** alternative food, tourism planning, insurgent planning, self-organization, urban agriculture

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Planners and policy makers around the globe are facing a challenge of addressing large number of issues that affect the quality of life in cities (Healey, 1998, Myers, 1988). According to the Global Health Observatory (GHO) data from 2014, 54% of the total global population lives in urban areas and in the future, these numbers are only expected to grow<sup>1</sup>. Considering the amount of people who live in- and move through cities daily, urban planning and good governance is needed to facilitate sustainable development and to assure a high quality of life for residents. Nevertheless, planning for a quality of life in modern cities is a very complicated task. The reason is that in these days most of the problems that affect the quality of life in cities are very complex which means that there is no one solution to them, and perhaps even the sole nature of the problem is arguable (Rittel & Webber, 1973). As Knapp (2008) argued, when trying to address complex problems, one should not think in terms of solutions but interventions, as eliminating problem might not be possible, or at least not in short-term. Hence, "one should recognize that actions occur in an ongoing process, and further actions will always be needed" (Knapp, 2008). This description of wickedness also represents the nature of the problems in tourism dispersion and suitable planning in cities. This study is an attempt to bridge the disciplines of urban planning and tourism planning to address the issue of managing capacity in cities that became popular tourism destinations. This problem is very severe in Amsterdam, the main case study, and Rome, the comparative case in this study where tourism is increasingly considered as a burden. In both cities, planners and policy makers desperately seek for measures to manage tourism capacity to maintain the quality of life in city without losing the economic benefits of tourism.

### *Overcrowding in cities*

Taking the problem of overcrowding in the city centres, each city requires a tailor-made strategy that suits its context, needs and uses its unique potential. On top of that, it needs to be noticed that the way people experience crowdedness is subjective and so are the sources of irritation in a crowd (Neuts & Nijkamp, 2012). Surprisingly, in a case study of the city of Bruges in Belgium, crowding has generally been not seen as negative. On the other hand, when it comes to crowding caused by tourism, the desirable ratio is often imbalanced which brings about the problem of overcrowding. Barcelona (Marine-Roig, 2011), Amsterdam (Riganti & Nijkamp, 2008) Rome (Celata, 2012) and Venice (Quinn, 2007) are examples of cities that struggle with carrying tourist capacity which led to a perceived lack of satisfaction in relation to the quality of life for the residents. Moreover, it turns out that also tourists blame overcrowding for negatively affecting their holiday experience. This has been proved by the study of Santana-Jiménez & Hernández (2011) which showed that overcrowding not only reduces the quality of tourist experience but also has an impact on the destination appeal.

### *Managing the tourism capacity of city tourism*

Surprisingly, even though the impacts of the growing number of city trips cause serious capacity problems in city centres, the numbers of trips and accommodations are still growing

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.who.int/gho/urban\\_health/situation\\_trends/urban\\_population\\_growth\\_text/en/](http://www.who.int/gho/urban_health/situation_trends/urban_population_growth_text/en/)

(WTO, 2012). It is almost a trend among Europeans to pick any of the European cities for their holiday break; for many, the only determinants of choice are good connection and at low price (Ateljevic & Page, 2009, p.13). Given this rapid boom in the number of visitors in cities, questions about how to handle these changes emerge. From the economic point of view, the solution lies within the entrepreneurial ability to respond to new tourism trends which involve satisfying the demand to its economic maximum (Ateljevic & Page, 2009, p.14). However, there is a wide agreement in the scientific literature that the liberal market tends to overexploit common pool resources and so it is more likely to fail in achieving operational sustainability (Agrawal, 2002, p.56). Therefore, it is in the hands of the public institutions to take actions that assure sustainable future. Hereby, tourism dispersion is a strategy to address the problem of overcrowding in city centres while accommodating the demand and increasing benefits. The function of dispersion is to spread tourists outside the overcrowded areas. Intuitively, one can imagine that such strategy relies heavily on communication and persuasive marketing to reach and convince tourists. However, successfully alleviating tourism pressure from city centre requires a good strategy. For example, a study of Celata (2012) showed that the city centre acts as a magnet that attracts tourists thanks to the high concentration of touristic hot spots and infrastructures. This is reflected in the price of tourist accommodations which tends to decrease with the distance from the city centre (Celata, 2012). Acknowledging the crucial role of city centre in city tourism does bring about some scepticism towards the feasibility of the measures of tourism dispersion. For this reason, the CEO of PATA (The Pacific Asia Travel Association) Mario Hardy argued that “tourists need to be reminded that a country’s beauty is defined by its people, culture, heritage and diversity, and not by one famous location. The dispersion of tourists allows people to see this beauty and at the same provide an economic boost to these local communities” (speech during PATA Aligned Advocacy Dinner in 2015<sup>2</sup>). Even though there is no standard format for tourism dispersion, there are inspirational examples of tourism destinations that made attempts to disperse tourism. For example, in an online interview<sup>3</sup>, Randy Durband, the CEO of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council, talked about the tourism dispersion from the Angkor Wat- the UNESCO World Heritage site that is one of the top world tourism destinations. Here, an alternative was proposed by organization called Community Based Tourism (CBT). This organization promoted a new site: Banteay Chhmar- a similar archaeological site, three hours away where local people started to offer homestays. Randy Durband concluded that the community based tourism in Banteay Chhmar offers an authentic experience to tourists who will have a similar experience as in Angkor Wat, but without the huge crowd.

#### *Tourism dispersion: strategies to spread tourism across a city*

Nevertheless, proposing another destination to tourists is just one of the options as tourism spreading tourists across a city is also an option. In fact, one can observe that in many cities tourist accommodations already did spread to the neighbourhoods outside the city centre. Probably the best example that illustrates this trend is the popularity of Airbnb

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.pata.org/pata-fourth-aligned-advocacy-dinner-to-be-held-at-stationers-hall-in-london-united-kingdom/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://staging.pataconversations.com/tourist-dispersion-a-solution-to-overcrowding/>

accommodations. Airbnb is a website that offers homestays and local experiences.<sup>4</sup> The desirable effect of spreading tourism to neighbourhoods is that tourists not only overnight outside the city centre but also spend there their time throughout the day. However, if tourists staying in residential neighbourhoods, still travel from their accommodations to the city centre this only contributes to larger flows and even greater problems with carrying tourism capacity in the city centre (Celata, 2012). Here, the burning but unanswered question is how planners should respond to the market and the bottom-up developments and what these developments mean for their work on tourism dispersion? Considering the complexity of dispersing tourists within the city, a careful consideration of such strategy is crucial to assure sustainable outcomes. Firstly, it is worthwhile to identify a type of tourism that has a potential to attract visitors to niche places with quality experiences. This translates into promotion of a relevant theme to a corresponding tourist target group. For the tourists for whom overcrowding and decreased authenticity of tourism offerings negatively affects their holiday experience, exploring new sites in cities could be an alternative. Furthermore, it turns out that the first and second time visitors tend to do different activities and their visiting pattern differs in general (Lau & McKercher, 2004). Using GPS to map the visiting patterns of visitors of Hong Kong, this study concluded that first time and second time visitors had different motivations to visit the city. "First-time visitors were motivated to visit Hong Kong to explore, while repeat visitors came to consume. First-time visitors intended to participate in a wide range of geographically dispersed activities, while repeat visitors intended to shop, dine, and spend time with family and friends" (Lau & McKercher, 2004).

#### *Possible alternatives to tourism in the city centre, tourism trends and tourism motivations*

Given the goals of tourism dispersion, one may wonder what type of tourism assures sustainable tourism development in the city neighbourhoods while appealing to tourists in a way that motivates them to go outside the city centre. In this context, alternatives to mass tourism include various forms of ecotourism (Wight, 1993) and slow mobility holidays such as cycling holidays (Lumsdon, 2000). Even though there is a group of scholars who questioned if the interest in environmental sustainability translates into a real demand for quality experiences in tourism (Budeanu, 2007, Martens & Spaargaren, 2005), Chafe (2005) found with multiple surveys that tourists are willing to pay higher prices for more sustainable holidays. This demand for sustainable tourism can be partially explained by the fact that choices related to leisure time and holidays became a way for expressing identity (Robinson & Novelli, 2005, pp. 1-11). The authors illustrated that in the following way: "if cycling as a home leisure phenomenon provides a way of social and individual identification/ distinction (complete with the purchases of clothing, equipment, attendance at cycling events, etc.), such a market will also seek to express itself in its holiday choices such as looking for destinations and resorts with a cycling friendly environment" (Robinson & Novelli, 2005 p.7). This idea of quality-oriented tourism executed through sustainable choices is a mantra of Slow Travel Movement- an extension of Slow Food Movement- that promotes environmentally friendly holidays and embedding in the local aspects of culture and food (Fullagar, Markwell & Wilson, 2012, p.1). In this way, "local food can play an important role in the sustainable tourism experience

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<sup>4</sup> for more information check [www.airbnb.com](http://www.airbnb.com)

because it appeals to the visitor's desire for authenticity within the holiday experience" (Sims, 2009). Indeed, food tourism has been long identified as a theme that has a vast potential to attract visitors to new destinations thanks to the growing interest of people in food (Getz, Robinson, Andersson & Vujicic, 2014, p. 44). Especially in cities, people show a renewed interest in alternative foods (Woese, Lange, Boess & Bögl, 1997) and the alternative food movement (Harris, 2009). For example, the booming interest in food trucks that started in Los Angeles well illustrates how alternative food and unique methods of its preparation become very hipster (Dubecki, 2011, Gill, 2012). Similarly, the popularity of alternative food in cities resulted in great popularity of farmer's markets and various food events (Hall & Sharples, 2008, p.3-23, 197-249). One could say that in the context of globalizing world that is full of stress, alternative food is an antidote and escape from routines (Getz et al 2014, p. 45). In fact, deep interest of people in food is certainly an increasing phenomenon, as food choices are nowadays strongly related to people's lifestyle (Getz et al, 2014, p.51). Moreover, the topic of food became a highly fashionable hobby, resulting in that many people share on a daily bases pictures of food, recipes and claims regarding food choices and diets through social media, blogs and websites (Getz et al, 2014, p.52). The fashion to have a food-related lifestyle goes hand in hand with people's' interest in other countries and their food cultures, especially during holidays (Tellström, Gustafsson and Mossberg, 2006). Consequently, there is a sub-group of food tourists who share a deep interest in food and local cuisines and so are willing to travel especially for that (Getz et al, 2014, p.17). However, with increased touristification, tourism destinations experienced a decline in the quality of food offerings, which stimulates foodies to search for authentic food experiences outside the tourist hot spots (Mak, Lumbers & Eves, 2012). Increasingly popular are farm-based restaurants and agritourism (Barbieri, 2013, Shen et al, 2009).

#### *Knowledge gap and goal of this study*

Even though much is written about the future of food tourism in the rural and semi-rural area, very little is known about what the interests in alternative food mean for food tourism in cities. For example, very little is known about the recreational and touristic use of urban agriculture (Lovell, 2010). Even though urban agriculture has a potential for tourism and recreation, it is still not researched how these areas could be used or how this kind of tourism could be defined (Lovell, 2010). This also suggest an unexplored potential of alternative food as an attraction and motivation for tourists to leave the city centre. In this way, alternative food might be an omitted opportunity to alleviate tourism pressure from city centres.

Considering the issue of overcrowding in both case studies on one hand, and the popularity of alternative food on the other, the main goal of this master thesis is to find out if alternative food fosters tourism dispersion. Therefore, the focus will be given to alternative food tourism (AFT) in the neighbourhoods outside the city centre in Amsterdam and Rome. Furthermore, based on the stakeholders' perceptions, it will be discussed why alternative food is a suitable theme for tourism dispersion in Amsterdam and how to foster tourism dispersion in the alternative food theme. Therefore, to be socially relevant, this study includes the most recent plan 'City in Balance' / 'Stad van de Balance' (City of Amsterdam, 2016) and the dispersion strategy called Neighbourhood Campaign (Amsterdam Marketing, 2016). Next to that, the role of case study in Rome is to identify success factors and provide inspiration for

Amsterdam regarding enhancing the alternative food theme in tourism. In this way, this study contributes to the debate about the replicability of Italian model in the Northern countries. The split in opinion is among those who argue that the Italian type of lifestyle does not fit into the western mentality and those who see potential for institutional learning (Blay-Palmer & Donald, 2006). Furthermore, the empirical study is rounded off with a scientific literature review to complete and evaluate findings against the existing body of literature on one hand and on the other to add to existing debates and to explore the understudied topic of alternative food tourism in cities. Finally, the last goal is to bring the knowledge gained in the case studies together with the scientific knowledge from the literature review to conceive recommendations for the municipality of Amsterdam regarding how to go about tourism dispersion in the neighbourhoods in the theme of alternative food projects. More specification regarding methodology and study design can be found in the chapter four.

## CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### Framework of a 'Meaningful tourism experience'

This thesis will use a framework of a meaningful tourism experience to study the substantial part of the alternative food tourism (AFT) experience in Amsterdam in Rome. This framework was proposed by Mason and O'Mahony (2007) to study stories about food that can be created or enhanced to promote place-based tourism. In this framework, possible themes of food stories in tourism are suggested. These themes are: cuisine, lifestyle, regionalism, environment, rurality and health (Mason & O'Mahony, 2007). The premise of employing food-inspired stories in tourism gives a new identity to a place and makes it more appealing to tourists (Mason & O'Mahony, 2007). Therefore, food stories can be used as a destination branding strategy at sites of food production or even as an entire region (Warner, 2007).

The figure below presents the illustration of the framework retrieved from the paper of Mason & O'Mahoney (2007).

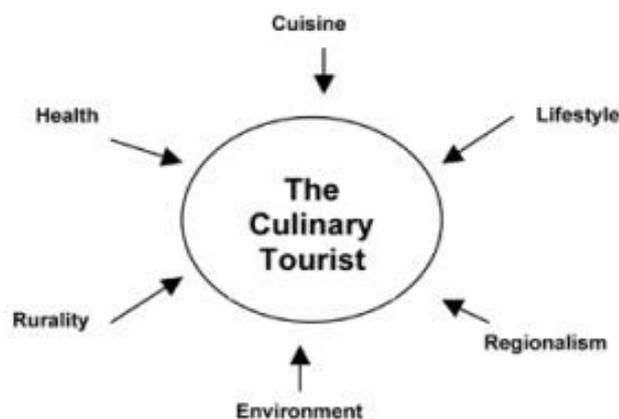


Fig1. Possible themes of culinary tourist (Mason & O'Mahony, 2007).

This framework draws upon the theory of 'experience economy' (Pine & Gilmore, 1999) to conceptualise what exactly meaningful experience in food tourism entails. Ideally, meaningful food tourism experiences are an adventure of exploration that includes four experiential realms: education, entertainment, escapism and aesthetics (Pine & Gilmore, 1999, p.31). Following up on the study of Pine & Gilmore (1999), Mason & O'Mahony (2007) argued that food experiences need to be analysed against tourist typology as these tend appeal to a niche in market. This has been done for example by Laing & Frost (2015, p.188) who argued that for the future food tourist the corresponding niche is a 'food explorer'- an opposite of a mass food tourist. Herby, "the exploration realm, exemplified by food explorer, goes beyond merely combing these four realms" (Laing & Frost, 2015, p.188). For example, they argue that food explorers are also driven by a search for authenticity, which is an important determinant for a growing number of tourist in general (Cohen, 1988). Given the authenticity of food as a prior requirement, Laing & Frost (2015, p. 177) argue that food tourists want more than a mere experience of a staged performance in their holiday experience.

Furthermore, food explorers are motivated by their "ego to experience something new and unique" which is why "they want surprises, not certainty" (Laing & Frost, 2015, p.181). These tourists tend to avoid places that have no real historical identity or uniqueness (Albrecht, 2011). For this reason, niche and hidden food spaces are appealing to food explorers, in contrary to an overcrowded and mass-tourism spots. Finally, foraging is another activity appreciated by food explorers as it not only enables them consumptions but also having the thrill of search for ingredients of their meals (Laing & Frost, 2015, p.188). Moreover, an important feature of food explorers is that their values tend to be related to sustainability standards (Laing & Frost, 2015, p.188). Here, sustainable food tourism experiences are understood in a broad context of economic, environmental and sociocultural sustainability. This understanding is focused on the tourist values that influence their concern about the impacts of their experiences and consumption choices on places that they visit during their travels (Laing & Frost, 2015). Additionally, sustainability, especially in relation to food, is often conceptually linked to quality by consumers, which is also the line of reasoning that this study adopts (Warner, 2007).

### **Framework of suitable contemporary approaches to modern city planning for sustainable and place-based tourism development**

In this thesis project, I take a broad perspective for studying tourism planning by applying the theories of collaboration and self-organization. This combination was chosen to account for both formal and informal planning practices in tourism development. Below, both collaborative planning and self-organization are discussed in detail.

#### Collaborative planning

Firstly, I chose collaborative planning as a suitable approach to address the planning task of tourism dispersion that is based on a goal of a balanced life for everyone living, working and visiting Amsterdam. Undoubtedly, modern cities change rapidly and planners are faced with 'wicked' problems that require approaches that accommodate uncertainty and risk (Rittel & Webber, 1973). These claims are in fact a call for a "shift in planning away from a generic

frame of reasoning towards a situation-specific approach, which allows alternative views to flourish” (Zhang, de Roo & van Dijk, 2015 p.161). Therefore, the suitability of the collaborative planning approach is that it is designed to tackle complex problems, such as the one of tourism dispersion. Thus, since spreading tourists to the Amsterdam's neighbourhoods affects a broad range of stakeholders, there is a need to include their perceptions and to create a commitment (Potschin & Haines-Young, 2013). Herby, “collaborative planning approach appears as a means to overcome the recognised fragmented nature of tourism development. It attempts to act as a tool to solve the many problems that arise when there is a lack of understanding and few shared common goals between the many parties often involved in tourism” (Ladkin & Bertramini, 2002). Thanks to the representativeness, collaboration is more likely to assure an equal distribution of benefits (Tosun & Jenkins, 1998). Furthermore, collaborative planning can be characterised by a variety and diversity in its forms, scales at which it occurs, stakeholders that it brings together, motivations to work together and institutional arrangements (Emerson, Nabatch & Balogh, 2012). Westerink et al (2016 p. 150) argue that in collaborative planning there is a need for “defining and redefining the boundary dividing the roles of self-governance and formal government, as well as the choice of collaboration partners”. In some instances, planning can also be initiated and performed by organized group of non-governmental actors- this kind of planning can be referred to as self-governance (Ostrom, 1992, 2005, 2010). In the context of self-governance, the role of planners can be described as ‘framing’ and as ‘enabling, facilitating, encouraging diversity in styles of organising’ (Healey, 2006, p. 289).

Shifting the planning power from planners to citizens in collaborative processes does prove to be beneficial for both successful implementation of plans and for the society in general but the practice also shows that in some instances the presence of planners is not needed at all to achieve planning goals (Ostrom, 2005, pp. 131-155). This idea that citizens can contribute to the way in which a city develops outside the governmental control comes partially from the disappointment in the participatory planning (Boonstra & Boelens, 2011).

#### *Constraints and facilitators of collaboration*

Collaborative planning is a very promising approach to planning modern cities and tourism developments “however, just like the technical paradigm, the communicative approach to planning did not always yield the desired results, as the conditions under which both technical and communicative planning work are specific and cannot always be met” (Zhang, de Roo & van Dijk, 2015 p.161). Not meeting the targets of collaboration is a result of first and foremost when the political and instructional context is not supportive (Margerum, 2002). In other words, in a context of for example governments with a centralized power and a range of cultural barriers, public sector is more likely to fail in attempts for establishing collaboration (Ladkin & Bertramini, 2002). As a result of a poor base for collaboration, stakeholders tend to end up being disappointed in the process and outcomes of collaboration. The main sources of disappointment include: a lack of clear communication, short-term objectives, poor information, slow decision-making processes and implementation of decision and a lack of an organisation (Ladkin & Bertramini, 2002).

Next to that, there are also limitations to the process of collaboration (Margerum, 2002). However, whether a factor constrains or facilitates the process of collaboration can depend on

an extent to which a factor is absent or present. Below, a list of factors that influence collaboration is presented in a form of facilitators of collaboration that are listed in four main points. This means that the absence of a given facilitator makes it a constraint. Importantly, these factors are mostly interdependent (Margerum, 2002).

The first important condition of collaboration in tourism is that all the potential stakeholders need to be identified and legitimised (Roberts & Simpson, 1999). This step of stakeholder assessment was examined in Costa Dourada, Brazil where it was proved to be an important pre-requirement to start off a project. The goal identifying and legitimizing stakeholders is assuring representatives to stimulate consideration of various planning problems (Araujo & Bramwell, 1999). Interestingly, a study of 60 different planning processes in USA presented an evidence for that with a more inclusive stakeholder involvement, plans are stronger and are more likely to be implemented (Burby, 2003). At this stage, a recognition of interdependence among stakeholders is a factor facilitating collaboration (Ladkin & Bertramini, 2002). Ladkin & Bertramini (2002) found out that more inclusive process of participation can be achieved though launching “awareness campaigns for residents on the benefits of tourism, and the development of economic linkages between the residents and tourism” (Ladkin & Bertramini, 2002).

Secondly, the literature shows that commitment of stakeholders to plans decides about the success in achieving planning goals, especially long-term ones (Ng, Rose, Mak & Chen, 2002). Here, planning practitioners may generate the commitment to a project and its implementation by assuring that the stakeholders feel that their goals and perceptions has been accounted for in the plans (Ng, Rose, Mak & Chen, 2002). More specifically, a case study of Watershed management in Intermountain Region in USA showed that success of plans lies within the involvement of stakeholders from the moment when data about a problem is collected and when first objectives are set (Bentrup, 2001).

Thirdly, establishing trust and allowing for informal dialogue is crucial for developing most fruitful plans (Bentrup, 2001). When studying collaboration processes in practice, Lee (2007) found out that “both elites and nonelites deployed informal communication to amplify and to defuse pressure for consensus. Much of the power of informal communication derived from its relation to local knowledge and place-based networking”.

Lastly, re-educating the society and planners about a shift from top-down planning regimes is needed to create a fertile ground for collaboration (Ganesh & Holmes, 2011). The reason for focusing on planners is that their behaviour and abilities have a vast impact on the process of collaboration. Consequently, planners should facilitate the process and enable the change to happen (Margerum, 2002). Therefore, planners need to assure that all the different perceptions are included (Burby, 2003). What is not the role of planners in collaboration however is to oppose their formats and solutions upon the stakeholders and to predetermine the outcomes of planning process. As Wheaton (1969) put it: “there are enough cases in which the planners have been wrong and their solutions irrelevant” (p.241). This sentence simply serves as reminder that stakeholders should be the one who choose for solutions that are meaningful to them. Nevertheless, according to Burby (2003), planners can serve with suggestions of

issues to the discussion that are not likely to be mentioned by the stakeholders. More specifically, the study of Burby (2003) found out that “planners were twice as likely as citizens to be one of the sources of attention to natural hazards in comprehensive plans”. Therefore, the role of planners is not only in empowering but also informing stakeholders when needed.

Using collaborative approach as a new form of planning requires however more than only paying attention to the process of making plans. In his book, Landry & Bianchini (1995, p.7) introduced a concept of creative city –one where services are the main pillar of the city's economy. For this reason, the city of Liverpool created policies to attract creative minds to the city's neighbourhoods that need uplifting, such as old industrial sites (Landry & Bianchini, 1995 p.30). Becoming a creative city or a creative tourism destination depends on the amount of innovative start-up's and citizen initiatives but also on the attitude that the city takes towards new developments. Landry & Bianchini (1995, p.28) argued that the city can become more creative by using events and organizations as a catalyst to create opportunities for very different stakeholders to come together and have creative discussions, foster networking and perhaps even initiate unique collaborations. Example of such catalyst is the organization called Common Purpose which brings together actors from different sectors to discuss issues present in cities and find ways to address them comprehensively and across the organizational, cultural and geographic borders (<http://commonpurpose.org>). Here, the formal and informal planning influences each other.

### Self-organization

Interestingly, planning in modern cities does not only take a form of official planning (Heylighen, 2008). In fact, cities change as a result of self-organization: informal actions performed by various individuals in a parallel to each other way. A sum of these actions is amplified results at larger scale (Zhang, de Roo & van Dijk, 2015). Importantly, urban developments and land-use changes that occur because of self-organization are non-linear and highly unpredictable (Portugali, 1999, p.9-13). Nevertheless, the impacts of self-organization might be substantial, which is why planners need to open to collaboration and account for informal planning practices (Westerink et al, 2016). However, to do that, modern city planners need a new, customized approach that builds on the knowledge about self-organization and complex adaptive systems rather than on the premises of linearity and causation (Innes & Booher, 1999).

Similarly, as in the city planning, much of the developments in tourism occurs as a result of informal practices. On top of that, tourism industry is subjected to forces from within and outside the destination (Baud-Bovy, 1982). Hereby, a tourism destination is embedded in the global networks of tourism demand (McDonald, 2009). In this way, tourism is an industry that operates in the context of unpredictability and rapid change (Russell & Faulkner, 2004). Herby, the concept of self-organization helps to study the chaotic nature of tourism developments and influences of the global networks and trends (McDonald, 2009). Hence, the key to a success in tourism development is the ability to take an advantage of the global interconnections of destinations (Russell & Faulkner, 2004). Undoubtedly, understanding this complexity is a major challenge in tourism planning.

Tourism planning literature identifies two forces that shape the industry, namely exogenous (outside destination) and endogenous (within the destination) (Baud-Bovy,1982). Exogenous market changes in tourism are often nonlinear which is why they are called by chaos theorists a 'butterfly effect' (Gleick, 1987). "Examples of butterfly effect in tourism would include instances where an exponential growth in visitor numbers arises from the compounding effect of a single event, such as the extension of jet airliners to a previously isolated destination or a development of an innovative holiday package which taps a particularly significant emerging market" (Faulkner, 2003, p.172). From the perspective of these forces, Chang et al (1996) perceive tourism as a "transaction process incorporating the exogenous forces of global markets and multinational corporations as well as the endogenous powers of local residents and entrepreneurs". This line of reasoning can be adapted to evaluate the significance of the interplay between these two forces at a destination. Unfortunately, a lack of control on the exogenous forces of mass tourism has caused many negative social impacts and environmental over-exploitation in many destinations around the world (Aramberri & Butler, 2005, p.174). Because of that, tourism industry has received a lot of criticisms for the fact it tends to be shaped by exogenous forces rather than planned activities (Gunn, 1994; Hall, 2000; Inskoop, 1991; Mathieson & Wall, 1982; Pearce, 1989).

#### *Integral approach to planning*

All in all, informal tourism planning does have a large influence on the sector, however, this importance is often bagatelized. As explained above, bureaucracy and regulations in planning do not give the flexibility that is needed to account for self-organization and participation. Achieving adaptive attitude however means structural changes in the way public institutions operate. According to Schafft & Brown (2000) this is probably the most difficult obstacle to overcome as it requires trust, tolerance and open mind for alternatives. The goal is therefore to achieve an integrity in city planning as neither formal planning nor self-organizational practices work in isolation (Zhang, de Roo & van Dijk, 2015). In this way, facilitating the process of planning from bottom-up can help to connect them to the generic regional planning (Westerink et al, 2016, Zhang, de Roo & van Dijk, 2015).

### **CHAPTER 3: MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION AND SUB-QUESTIONS**

#### **Main research question and a conceptualization of used terms**

This main research question of this thesis is: Does alternative food foster tourism dispersion in cities?

Given the interest in cities, this study focuses on two capitals: Amsterdam and Rome. Importantly, considering the issue of overcrowding, in this study the focus is given to the neighbourhoods in these cities that are not overcrowded by tourist.

In case of Amsterdam the area that experiences the biggest problem with overcrowding is the city centre. According to a survey conducted by the municipality of Amsterdam among its residents (Amsterdam Plan, 2016, p.17), the crowding caused by tourists in city centre of Amsterdam is perceived as unpleasant. Next to that, the results of the same survey (p.20) revealed that the balance was disturbed by overcrowding and related to it nuisances also in

de Pijp and Oud-West (neighbourhoods next to the city centre). Based on this data, this study focuses on alternative food projects and experiences located outside these neighbourhoods, thus in the remaining 19 districts and the near countryside.

Fig 2: City districts Amsterdam Folder<sup>6</sup>



Fig 3: Neighbourhood Campaign



In Rome, the areas that experience the most problems with overcrowding are located within the city walls of ancient Rome (Celata, 2012). In order to gain insights into how Rome developed spatially and in relation to tourism, a tourism scholar from the local university was interviewed in the first phase of the research in order to gain understanding of the city and tourism developments. He explained that in Rome, the non-touristic neighbourhoods lie mostly outside the city walls- the so called 'peripheries' (In-depth interview RM 3). Furthermore, the neighbourhoods built in the later countries became also very popular among tourists and foreigners who decided to move to Rome. In this way, the centrally located districts of the 'old Rome' gentrified rapidly. Next to that, the presence of Vatican on the other side of the river certainly another tourism centrality and therefore contributes to intensive tourist flows (In-depth interview RM 3).

Accordingly, this study will investigate alternative food tourism in the neighbourhood outside the city walls, the peripheries of Rome and the close countryside.

<sup>5</sup> Source Fig 1: <https://www.amsterdam.nl/buurtten>

<sup>6</sup> Source Fig 2: [https://issuu.com/iamsterdam/docs/amsterdam\\_neighbourhood\\_guide\\_2016](https://issuu.com/iamsterdam/docs/amsterdam_neighbourhood_guide_2016)

Fig 4. Touristic areas in Rome <sup>7</sup>



Fig. 5. Map of Rome<sup>8</sup>



Furthermore, the term ‘alternative food tourism’ (AFT) is used in this paper in reference to alternative food attractions, multifunctional agriculture and alternative food tours and experiences. The main criteria used to identify what belongs to AFT was that it does not adhere to the principles of mass tourism. Herby, the framework of meaningful tourism experience helped to identify relevant experiences. Next to that, determining what alternative food is based on the principles of alternative food movement and slow food (as discussed in literature review). However, considering that AFT is a new phenomenon, intuition and gradual exploration allowed to build knowledge about what AFT exactly entails.

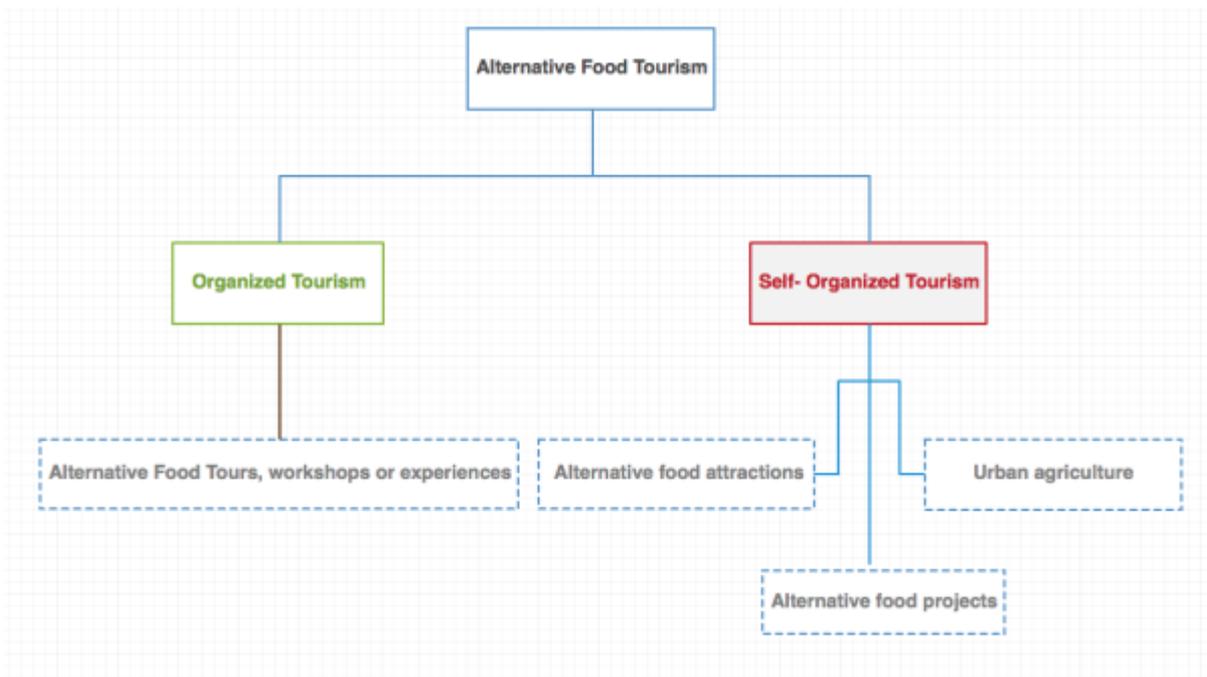


Fig. 6: Conceptualization of alternative food in this study

<sup>7</sup> Source for Fig.4 : [https://www.rometoolkit.com/accommodation/hotel\\_districts.htm](https://www.rometoolkit.com/accommodation/hotel_districts.htm)

<sup>8</sup> Source: Google maps, 2017

Furthermore, in this study, tourism dispersion is understood as a strategy that aims at attracting visitors to areas that are located within the city or in its near countryside and do not suffer from overcrowding. In this way, tourism dispersion is a strategy that might rely on thematic routes created to direct tourists to alternative sites (Olsen, 2003). Furthermore, Tisdell (1987) argued that in tourism dispersion, choices regarding the optimum need to be made. Hence, at the heart of sustainable tourism dispersion strategy there is a continuous process of decision-making and searching for a balance that is different for each city. The reason is that tourism dispersion is once and for all about maintaining diversity and quality in relation to various demands (Tisdell, 1987).

Finally, in this study, dispersion of tourists refers to international tourists, domestic tourists and day-trippers. The reason is that all these groups are causing overcrowding and all could be interested in alternative food.

### Sub-research questions

In order to answer the main research question, a set of sub-research questions is designed and applied in both case studies and for the literature review. The diagram below summarises the methodological set-up of this study in relation to research questions.

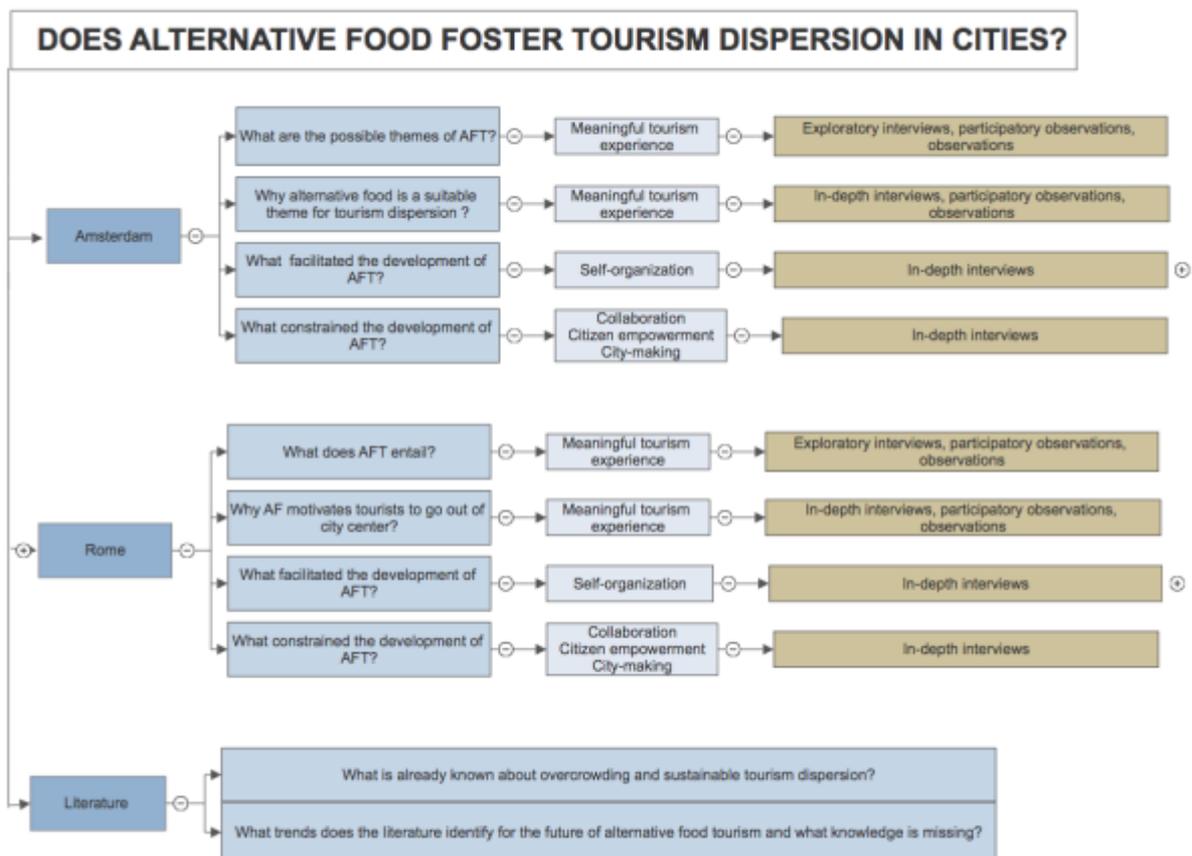


Fig 7. Research questions set-up

### Sub-questions Amsterdam

Firstly, in order to find out about the potential of alternative food theme in tourism dispersion, there is a need to find out what kind of experiences already exist in both cities. Based on the theoretical framework of meaningful tourism experiences by Mason & O'Mahony (2007), the first sub-question is:

1. What are the possible themes of alternative food tourism?
2. Is alternative food a suitable theme for tourism dispersion? Why?
3. In which way alternative food tourism contributes to alleviating tourist pressure from Amsterdam center?

Next, in order to find out how AFT developed in the neighbourhoods of Amsterdam, the framework of self-organization is applied as a lens to study informal planning practices. Thus, the sub-question is:

4. How did the alternative food emerge as a tourism theme in the neighbourhoods of Amsterdam?

Then, applying the framework of collaborative planning as a lens for studying the formal planning practices, the sub-question is:

5. Based on the stakeholders' personal experiences in projects development related to alternative food and /or tourism, what fosters or constrains the process of collaboration?
6. And, what steps can take the municipality to facilitate AFT from bottom-up?

### Sub-questions Rome

Based on the theoretical framework of meaningful tourism experiences by Mason & O'Mahony (2007), the sub-questions are:

1. What kind of alternative food tourism exist in the neighbourhoods of Rome and what are the possible themes of alternative food tourism?
2. Why alternative food motivates tourists to go outside of the touristic zone in Rome?
3. In which way alternative food tourism contributes to alleviating tourist pressure from the center of Rome?

Next, considering the goal to learn lessons from Rome, the theories of collaboration and self-organization are applied to inquire about how did alternative food tourism develop outside the touristic zones. Therefore, the sub-questions are:

4. What facilitated the development of alternative food tourism in the neighbourhoods of Rome?
5. What constrained development of alternative food tourism in the neighbourhoods of Rome?

#### Sub-questions for the literature review

1. What is already known in the literature regarding overcrowding and sustainable way of tourism dispersion?
2. What trends does the literature identify for the future of alternative food tourism and what knowledge is missing?

## **CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

#### Grounded Theory Study Design

Exploring the new phenomena of AFT from a perspective of qualitative research, I use the grounded theory to allow me for a systematic building of knowledge (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p.274). This cyclical process of knowledge acquisition is also called an 'abduction' or an 'emergent research design' (van den Broeck, 2014, pp. 135-140). With this study design, is particularly useful as I intend to explore a new phenomenon: alternative food tourism in the neighbourhoods of Amsterdam and Rome.

Considering that spatial planning is a discipline from which point of view I begin my research, in line with van den Broeck (2014, pp. 135-140), I argue that planning research should be strongly rooted in practice, oriented towards action and social change to be relevant. For this reason, planning context is important which informed the application of the grounded theory in this study. In the early stages of development of grounded theory research did not include theoretical frameworks to avoid limitations (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.276). Nevertheless, my application of grounded theory is in line with the later interpretation that acknowledges that researchers are inevitably influenced by the theories that they are familiar with and which they eventually choose to adopt (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.276).

Furthermore, I use a case study research design in order to gain an in-depth overview of each particular case (Stake, 1995, p XI). More specifically, a comparative case study design was chosen to provide inspirations, examples of good practices and lessons learned from Rome for Amsterdam. In this way, the purpose of referring to a comparative case is to be inspirational. In this way, the function of comparative study is to stimulate creativity: "comparison is strongest as a choosing and provoking, not a proving, device: a system for questioning, not for answering" (Stretton, 1969, 246-247).

### Case selection

For this study, two cities have been chosen: Amsterdam and Rome, with the first having a central function in this study. The choice of these cities was motivated by the fact that both capitals deal with problems of overcrowding caused by tourism. Additionally, the government in Amsterdam already made attempts to design and implement measures of tourism dispersion.

The choice of Rome as a comparative case was motivated by that Rome is a well-established food tourism destination, where food is strongly connected to culture. On top of that, slow food and slow tourism are Italian inventions makes it a suitable case to learn from.

As Forester (1993, p.201) explains, information-oriented criterion of selecting cases is driven by a peruse of produce a relevant knowledge which is also my motivation.

### Case typology

According to the typology proposed by Flyvbjerg (2006) Amsterdam and Rome can be defined as critical cases. The characteristic of critical cases is that they allow for logical deduction (Flyvbjerg, 2006). In other words, using critical case studies to research whether alternative food tourism fosters dispersion allows to use these cases as examples to learn about alternative food tourism as a phenomenon. This does necessarily imply generalization. Instead, critical case study provides findings from intensive observations, situated in its context and detailed, as summarizing might be counter-productive (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

Furthermore, since both cases are unique and the purpose of this study is to perform a comparative case study design, there is a need to consider the importance of a planning context in both cities and the characteristics of its tourism industry. The reason for focusing on the context of case studies is in line with Strauss & Corbin (1998, p.274) that context matters. In the appendix number 2, both cases are described with a focus on the planning and tourism context.

## **Research Methodology**

In order to study perceptions of the stakeholders involved in AFT, I apply qualitative research methods. Epistemologically, qualitative methods are meant for revealing the deeper meanings of stakeholders (Brewer, 2000, p.35). The choice of qualitative methods for this study includes semi-structured interviews, participatory observations and observations in the field. Next to this primary data, I also reviewed the existing scientific literature. Benefits of having various sources of data include gaining a nuanced overview and possibility to assess the various data sources against each other (Ng, 2015). In other words, "by examining information collected through different methods, the researcher can corroborate findings across data sets and thus reduce the impact of potential biases that can exist in a single study" (Bowen, 2009). Therefore, triangulating data allows to produce results which are "a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility" (Eisner, 1991, p. 110).

### Methods for interviews

For the interviews, my choice was to use semi-structured interviews in order to provide space for additional questions that appear as relevant during conversations (Grix, 2010, p.129). In order to account for various opinions and experiences, I interviewed a broad range of respondents who represented various stakes. First group of respondents are the representatives of the relevant departments of the municipality of Amsterdam and Rome. Second group is composed of entrepreneurs in alternative food tourism. Thirdly, citizens involved in initiatives in that are connected to AFT, for example through multifunctional urban agriculture were interviewed. Finally, academic experts in alternative food or tourism in Amsterdam and Rome were interviewed to gain a better understanding of the context and to evaluate the scale of the problems in my study.

The respondents were recruited mostly through snowball sampling. The reason for choosing this method is that it allows to reach to the respondents in the network thanks to people who are part of this network (Grix, 2010, p.129). Another advantage of this method is that it helps to discover and understand the networks better on its own (Noy, 2008). Furthermore, in order to assure a better representativeness, I also contacted several entrepreneurs and organizations involved in alternative food tourism whose contacts were available online.

In total, I conducted 29 in-depth interviews and 12 exploratory interviews. More specifically, in Amsterdam there were 16 in-depth interviews and 9 exploratory interviews carried out. In the case of Rome, there were 13 in-depth interviews and 3 exploratory interviews. The case of Amsterdam was more extensive given its central function in this study and prolonged time in the field. A complete list of interviews and their transcriptions are provided in the appendix number 1.

### Methods for observation and participatory observations

Next to the interviews, observational and participatory techniques were used. Namely, I took part in various tours and food experiences in Amsterdam and Rome to find out what kind of experiences exist and around which themes they were developed. Herby, my goal was to learn about AFT from the perspective of a tourist. Next to that, I visited various food projects in the neighbourhoods and urban farms in order to observe these settings and their context in the neighbourhoods. For a detailed overview of the experiences and their short description check the appendix number 1 p. 2-3 and p. 5-6. After each session of observation or participatory observation, I made field notes that described my experience and my reflections. Mostly, on a day of the field work, I made first notes which are short descriptions that include for example bullet points and keywords. Then, relevant points were elaborated. Additionally, instead of describing the setting, I took pictures in order to remind myself the context and its details. For the sake of assuring anonymity and privacy, these pictures are not part of the analysis.

### Organization of the fieldwork

The fieldwork in Amsterdam and Rome was organized in two stages of data gathering. In the first, exploratory phase I conducted a set of interviews that had a goal of introducing myself to the studied topic and stakeholders in the network. I tried to keep an open attitude and to be guided by the respondents in the discovery of the AFT and the planning context in Amsterdam. In this phase, I did several observations to learn about the situational context of

the studied initiatives and experiences. This helped me to understand the goals and motivations of the various stakeholders. In the second phase of in-depth research, guided by the grounded theory approach, I included the findings from the previous stage and chose the core stakeholders for in-depth interviews. At the second stage, I started to analyse my experiences and frame question with a lens of my theoretical framework.

In Amsterdam, the exploratory phase took one month and second, in-depth phase lasted two months. In Rome, the whole fieldwork took three weeks, with one week of the exploratory phase and two weeks of an in-depth interviewing.

### Methods for literature review

For the literature review, scientific publications in the domain of tourism, city planning and alternative food movement were reviewed. The most important keywords included: urban agriculture, multifunctional urban agriculture, slow food, sustainable tourism, food tourism, urban planning, tourism planning, overcrowding, self-organization, co-creation, participation, collaborative planning, future food tourism, city tourism. Scientific publications were chosen by searching for available publications with a help of search engines such as Scopus, Google Scholar, WUR library and Web of Science.

### Data analysis

Methods of qualitative data analysis included coding of transcribed data with a help of Atlas.ti software. Based on the suggestions on the coding methodology developed by Silverman (2014, pp.140-156), the following steps were taken:

1. Open coding: creating codes while reading through whole data
2. Evaluating codes (does the categories reflect well the data)
3. Focused coding: reducing codes based on the theoretical framework (keep only the codes that relate to the concepts from the theoretical framework)
4. Axial coding to create themes
5. Creating table that presents an overview of themes and responding codes

For more information about the codes and themes please check appendix number 3.

## **CHAPTER 5: RESULTS**

The results from the fieldwork in Amsterdam and Rome are organized in two sections. Results of each case study provide answers to the sub-questions and are organized in themes created in the process of data analysis. Below, the results from both cases are described and supported by quotes from the interviews.

## Results case study Amsterdam

### Alternative Food Tourism in Amsterdam

This theme includes data from interviews and field notes related to alternative food tourism in the neighbourhoods of Amsterdam. The results are organized in sub-paragraphs, each presenting a different theme of alternative food tourism. The presented themes are those that were identified by Mason & O'Mahoney (2007) but also include new themes that are unique for alternative food tourism. Based on the interviews and the fieldwork, I found out that a very broad range of unique experiences are offered in the neighbourhoods of Amsterdam in the theme of alternative food. Importantly, alternative food tourism attraction might emphasise only a one theme, but it might also include a combination of two or more themes. In fact, in mostly the themes of alternative food tourism experiences are strongly interconnected. One of the interviewed guides explained it in the following way:

“Food has been embedded in my tours but because they are usually quite multidisciplinary, so I say something about transport, buildings and food and the businesses, so for example on one tour I would take people to ‘De Ten Katemarkt’, and to ‘de Hallen’, and there would be a discussion there about businesses focused on food. I would take people to ‘InStock’ where we would have a discussion about food waste. Or I would take people to the market at ‘de Haarlemmerplein’ on Wednesday morning. It’s a good organic market and there is ‘Fish Harry’ who talks about organic fish, the issues with sourcing fish and seafood” (In-depth interview AMS 5)

In this way, alternative food tours are characterised by a rich content of an experience that goes beyond consumption of food, unlike in many forms of food tourism.

### *Urban Agriculture*

Next, ‘urban agriculture’ as tourist experience includes visits to the multifunctional urban farms that are hybrid places of food production, consumption and recreation. For example, ‘Tuinen van West’ is an area of multifunctional urban agriculture that is set up to receive tourists. Tourists are invited to stay at eco-lodges and can take part in activities such as picking up own fruits. In the theme of urban agriculture, in Amsterdam there are also organized experiences that include guided visits in community gardening and allotment gardens. In this way, tourists can visit Amsterdam by sightseeing various projects connected to urban agriculture around the city. Urban agriculture appeared to be one of the most important themes in alternative food tourism. Within this theme, tours of urban farms and gardens were offered by ‘CityPlot’. They offer a cycling tour that can be booked on the website called “Withlocals”. In the theme of urban agriculture, ‘CityPlot’ also offers educational workshops, community-building activities and experiences for families with kids. The interviewee described the workshop activities in a following way:

“For the workshops we have different themes around the year, so for example about seed-saving or edible flowers (...) or if you are interested in pollinators that attract bees we can talk about that” (In-depth interview AMS 6)

Next, in the theme of urban agriculture in Amsterdam there are urban foraging tours offered by ‘the River of Herbs’. They take groups to community gardens, green parts of the city or even outside Amsterdam in order to learn to recognize wild, edible plants and how to pick them. Additionally, people interested in learning about the ways in which such plants can be used can take part in workshops and apprenticeship courses. Therefore, people who join urban foraging tour are mostly interested in plants and food in city, are students or are searching for a unique experience (In-depth interview AMS 12).

### *Sustainability and innovation*

Secondly, sustainability and innovation was another common theme in Amsterdam’s alternative food tourism. In fact, the know-how of Amsterdam as a city of innovation and sustainability was perceived by the respondents as a part of Amsterdam’s identity and unique quality. Accordingly, sustainability and innovation is a theme chosen often by groups of students from different cities or countries on a summer school in Amsterdam, and delegations of planners and policy-makers who came to learn from Amsterdam. This kind of tours are offered by ‘Sustainable Amsterdam’ in form of bike tours to the projects about sustainability, urban regeneration, circular economy, energy, innovation in food systems and alternative food (Exploratory interview AMS 9, Participatory observations AMS 8).

### *Education and entertainment*

In the alternative food tourism, learning experiences are perceived as very important by the respondents. In fact, most of the tours are very content-oriented. On top of that, in order to assure a high quality of the experience alternative food tours are often guided by experts in a given domain. In fact, in many instances, guides of alternative food tours are only part-time guides and in the remaining time they are working at the alternative food projects themselves. In this way, alternative food tourism is a chance for these guides to raise awareness about sustainability issues within food systems in an attractive for tourist form. For example, project called ‘Taste Before You Waste’ offers an experience of preparing and eating a meal made of ingredients that were saved from being wasted. For the visitors, it is a unique experience that combines fun with learning.

Similarly, urban farming tours also often include educational experiences at the gardens. Here participation at a farm is a recreational work at a farm and a way to learn by doing.

### *Cuisine*

Furthermore, similarly as in food tourism, cuisine is an important theme of alternative food tourism. In fact, alternative food tourism in Amsterdam offers a unique way to get to know Dutch cuisine or high quality dining experiences. Interestingly, alternative food is often associated by the respondents with quality dining. In fact, most of the interviewed tourism

entrepreneurs observe a growth in the number of new gastronomic experiences outside the city centre in the theme of alternative food. According to the interviewee from 'Sustainable Amsterdam' these are restaurants such as 'In-stock' (offers meals made of foods that would otherwise be wasted) or de Kaas (restaurant in a greenhouse). Furthermore, alternative culinary experiences do not belong to mass food tourism and instead increasingly take a form of home dining with locals (offered by 'Eatwith') or cooking workshops (offered by 'Withlocals'). Nevertheless, in alternative food tourism in Amsterdam consumption of food was seldom considered the core of the experience.

### *Arts and culture*

Art and culture as a theme of alternative food tourism represent the connection between alternative food and the heritage of arts and culture in Amsterdam. This relationship was not very strong in Amsterdam, nevertheless some entrepreneurs found a unique way to tell stories about Amsterdam's architecture and art with a 'food-lens' on. For example, 'Farming the City' - a sub-projects of the CITIES foundation- offers a tour that tells stories about the importance of food in Amsterdam and how food needs influenced architecture of the city. In fact, former guide argued that each district in Amsterdam has been shaped by food production, processing of distribution in a unique way that can inspire stories for tourists. For example, in the Amsterdam harbour, stories about industrial era of food processing and transportation are told (In-depth interview AMS 10).

Furthermore, according to several respondents, visitors searching for alternative food experiences in the neighbourhoods visit iconic food projects such as 'Mediamatic'. This place is a restaurant and cafe where workshops and art exhibitions about nature, biotechnology and BioArt are held (<http://www.mediamatic.net>). In this innovative way, this place offers a unique combination of alternative food and modern art.

### *Health*

Health as a theme of AFT focuses on the healthiness of food in stories about alternative food. For example, in the North of Amsterdam there is a project called 'Noord-Oogst' - a multifunctional urban agriculture site that combines sustainable farming with facilities for tourism and recreation. They brand themselves with a focus on healthy food and healthy environment. A person involved in this project stated:

"Our unique selling point is healthiness, as sustainable as possible, food grown at the place (...) Our increased attention to healthiness causes that people like to identify themselves with this project and they are rewarding themselves by consuming at this place." (In-depth interview AMS 3)

Considering health as a theme, it has been observed that alternative food tourism in Amsterdam often included visits at sites that could be defined as salutogenic spaces (Participatory observations AMS 1, Observations AMS 9). Several respondents explained that tourists appreciate the possibility to spend time in a healthy environment. This demand was

described as particularly characteristics for parents travelling with children and searching for sites where children can play in a safe and stimulating good health environment (In-depth interview AMS 3, In-depth interview AMS 6).

### *Rurality*

Rurality is a theme in alternative food tourism in Amsterdam is present in the countryside tours. These tours are very popular among tourists and so most of the touring companies offer countryside tours. Food and food production, represented by cheese and windmills is often a main theme of countryside tours. Interestingly, while the mainstream countryside tours take large groups of tourists to the towns such as Volendam, the alternative food tours would take small groups of tourists to a smaller town for a visit at a local farm that makes milk and cheese. (In-depth interview AMS 11)

### *Regionalism*

'Regionalism' as a theme in AFT relates to the importance of the regional identity in the touristic experience. Herby, the regional identity of the province of Noord Holland or even the national identity is emphasized. For instance, the 'Old Amsterdam Milk Tour' tells stories about the tradition of milk production in the region and how it was brought to the city (<http://farmingthecity.net>). Similarly, regional food production does belong to alternative food tourism and it certainly is a buzzword. One way of representing the value of regionalism is a certification mark called "Erkend Streekproduct" given to the regional cheese called "Noord Hollandse Kaas". Nevertheless, in participant observations during alternative food tours the regional identity or regional produce was seldom emphasised in the relation to 'terroir', which might be a sign of that regionalism as a theme in alternative food tourism is not well-established yet.

### *Lifestyle*

Lifestyle as a theme in AFT relates to a way of living and travelling that is influenced by tourists' beliefs and values in relation to their consumption choices. For the respondents, lifestyle plays an important role in making alternative food a hype choice. In this way, alternative food became a slogan that appeals to tourists too. Following this trend, various sites use vegetable gardens, beehives or organic food to attract tourist. Several respondents also explained that there is a group of visitors who purposely seek for alternative food places as they offer a 'hype atmosphere'. For example, the North of Amsterdam is now a 'cool' place to go to, largely thanks to places such as de Ceuvel: an urban revitalization project created on a polluted industrial terrain. De Ceuvel was developed into a space where creative companies locate their offices in boats, and where a hype cafe offers meatless burgers and 'food with a story' (Observations AMS 5). Similarly, 'Food Truck Festival' is another example of how alternative food can be considered a lifestyle that derives from the street food culture (<http://smaakboulevard.com>).

### *Alternative Food Tourism as a meaningful tourism experience*

All in all, it can be concluded that in Amsterdam there is a wide range of unique alternative food experiences in various themes. Thanks to a rich content of the stories, focus on integration and participation, alternative food tourism in Amsterdam is a meaningful experience. AFT allows for a more complete experience thanks to aspects such as participation and education. Importantly, learning about Amsterdam with a food lens on, does not necessarily or solely require consumption. In fact, alternative food tours enlighten visitors about the problems and challenges of our food systems and stimulate responsible consumption rather than over-indulging. Interestingly, the guide from 'Sustainable Amsterdam' suggested that perhaps alternative food tourism does not need to even consist of consumption at all, as in some cases touristic visits could also be about contributing to local projects or city in general.

### Contribution of AFT to alleviating tourist pressure from Amsterdam centre

Thanks to the growing popularity of alternative food tourism, it has a potential to contribute to alleviating tourist pressure from Amsterdam city centre. In fact, alternative food tourism is growing so rapidly that entrepreneurs sometimes need to turn down booking requests. This suggests that there is an untapped potential of AFT that could be used in the neighbourhood campaign. One can think here of the range of thematic experiences in a form of tours, workshops, events, dining at restaurants, visiting farms etc. Until now, AFT developed organically, and emerged through the sum of all the individual tours and experiences. In this way, alternative food tourism already helps to alleviate the pressure from the city centre and it will continue doing so. Given the prerequisite of a small-scale experiences, it is undesirable to try to attract large number of tourists. It is rather the growing amount of alternative food experiences around the city that can make the impact. There some exceptions when short term events for example of food festivals, attracts large amounts of visitors to the neighbourhoods.

The contribution of alternation food tourism to spreading tourists across the city is present through the big range and the number of experiences that are offered in alternative food tourism. Importantly, most of the entrepreneurs in Alternative Food Tourism shared that they started to offer their experiences out of a disappointment in the mass tourism in the city centre. For example, guide form 'Sustainable Amsterdam' said that she is aware of the negative impacts that a mass tourism causes Amsterdam which is why she decided to search for new places that are often not touristic at all. In this way, she not only gives the visitors a glimpse into the real-life in Amsterdam but also avoids contributing to the problem of overcrowding in the busy areas of Amsterdam.

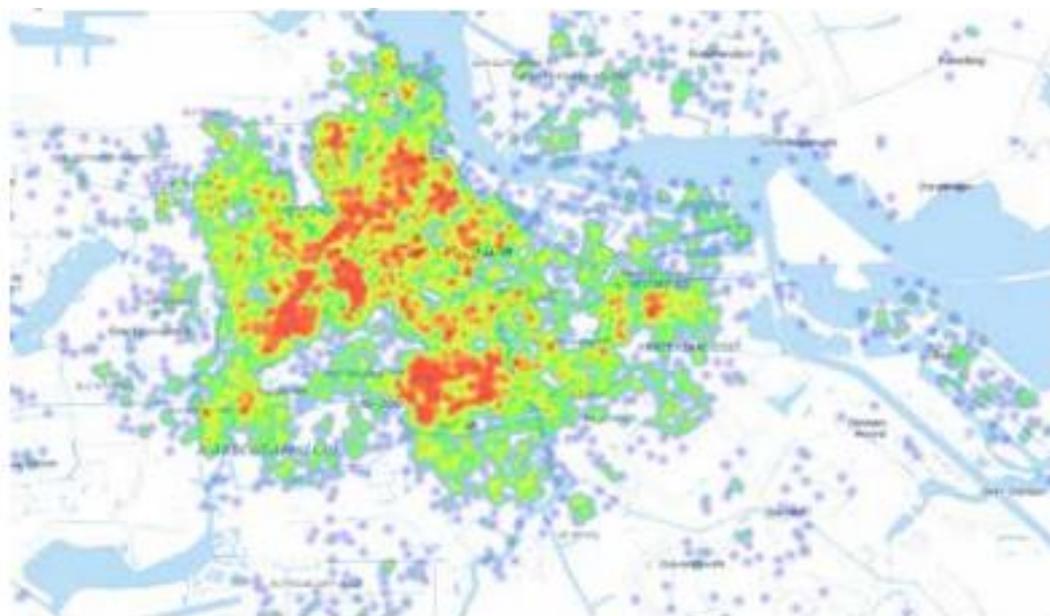
Furthermore, big Internet portals also started offering local experiences which are rapidly gaining on popularity. Intriguingly, many of these local experiences evolve around the theme of food. Namely, out of 46 experiences that the website 'Withlocals' offers in Amsterdam, 18 are food-related. These are 'home dinners & cooking classes' and 'food tours & tastings'<sup>9</sup>. Recently, Airbnb also launched a new service of 'experiences' with activities that have social

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<sup>9</sup> Retrieved from (<https://www.withlocals.com/experiences/the-netherlands/amsterdam>) on 20 January 2017

impact on the neighbourhoods and activities in the alternative food theme having a major share<sup>10</sup>. At the moment, these Experiences are only available in 12 major cities in the world, with Amsterdam not being part yet. However, next year this number will increase to 50 cities, including Amsterdam<sup>11</sup>. On top of that, a website called 'Eatwith' is established to connect home-cooks and visitors. Remarkably, more than 400 different menus are offered by local hosts in Amsterdam<sup>12</sup>. In this context, tourism offered by locals through intermediating portals on Internet is a powerful driver of self-organizing change in the alternative food tourism sector and it affects the spatial distribution of tourists. Here the role of the residents as host and guides has an enormous influence on where tourists stay overnight and the activities that they do during day. The spread of Airbnb accommodations in Amsterdam is illustrated below:

*Figure 8: Airbnb locations around Amsterdam in 2015 (Municipality of Amsterdam, 2016, p.35)*



Considering the recently launched service of experiences with locals, where alternative food is a popular theme, one can imagine that these experiences will be also spatially distributed around the various districts of Amsterdam.

#### Alternative Food Tourism as a suitable type of tourism in the neighbourhoods.

Alternative food is a suitable theme for tourism development in the neighbourhoods as it complies with the expectations of the residents, tourists and it also helps to achieve the municipal goals of spreading tourism. The Municipality and Amsterdam Marketing have

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.airbnb.com/experiences>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2016/11/17/airbnb-biedt-naast-appartementen-nu-ook-activiteiten-aan-a1532371>

<sup>12</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.eatwith.com/list/The+Netherlands/Amsterdam/> on 20 January 2017

already launched a Neighbourhood Campaign to promote the districts around the city centre. Unfortunately, the type of tourism that spread, especially to de Pijp and Oud West, still belongs to the mass tourism. Because of that, the problem of overcrowding has only increased. In the interviews, all the stakeholders of AFT (including municipality, Amsterdam marketing, entrepreneurs and civil initiatives in AFT) reflected on the most desirable ways for solving this problem. Based on that, the suitability, relevance and potential of AFT for alleviating tourist pressure from Amsterdam city centre is described below.

*Where residents are present, tourists follow.*

First, the Municipality and Amsterdam Marketing explained that strategies and developments in tourism should focus equally on the needs of tourists and residents. However, a starting point of tourism dispersion needs to be a city that is liveable for its residents (In-depth interview AMS 5, In-depth interview AMS 1). Then the premise is that the places that residents visit, are the one that have a potential to be attractive for the visitors. That is why, Amsterdam Marketing wants that residents to have a key role in the Neighbourhood Campaign as ambassadors of the city (In-depth interview AMS 1). Herby, the entrepreneurs and residents argued that alternative food tourism fulfils this requirement by bringing tourist to places that are meaningful for them. This includes for instance community gardens and project of urban agriculture that were developed by residents. Receiving tourists in these spaces is therefore a chance for the local communities to share their achievements and experiences. This in turn has been linked by the respondents to increased sense of pride and neighbourhood revitalisation.

*Support for local communities and initiatives*

Interestingly, alternative food tourism can take neighbourhood revitalisation as a primary goal too as in the case of the food festivals organized in Nieuw West. The initiator of these food festivals explained:

“Most of these events are born out of an idea to promote districts which are not so popular, and in which I want to contribute to local economy by helping local entrepreneurs to make use of the podium of my festival” (In-depth interview AMS 7)

Next to that, using alternative food places and projects as a podium for tourism in the neighbourhoods brings economic benefits to these projects, which allows for self-sufficiency and continuity. Furthermore, a guide from ‘Farming the City’ explained that alternative food tends to include experiences that do not focus only on consumption but on sharing and giving something back to local communities (In-depth interview AMS 10). Similarly, the guide from ‘CityPlot’ explained that taking tourists to the gardens and food projects is a part of their goal to spread message about urban farming and to support local farms:

“We support those gardens, by telling local visitors about a possibility to volunteer, so through the bike tours we were able to get more business to the gardens and volunteers, and we also make sure that we support them in other ways. We bring seeds and join their

meetings, so it's not just that we use their gardens, we make sure that they are getting something back" (In-depth interview AMS 6).

#### *Authenticity of a tourism experience*

Several respondents mentioned that it is important that tourism activities in the neighbourhoods reflect the identity of Amsterdam and the local area. For Amsterdam Marketing, it means that they search for tourists who truly appreciate Amsterdam:

"We look for people who come for Amsterdam as such and not for Amsterdam as a decor. We do not want people to only get drunk here, or only to smoke a joint here, or only to have a peak to the red-light district" (In-depth interview AMS 1).

The authenticity of the touristic product and experience is also fundamental to the residents and entrepreneurs involved in AFT. In fact, they argued that tourists appreciate the honest representation of the city and food stories that they tell. Herby, alternative food tourism offers non-staged experiences and quality food in contrary to mass food tourism. The residents and entrepreneurs involved in AFT argue that dispersing tourism should be done with a great care to not spread the problems of tourism pressure to the neighbourhoods. Therefore, tourism in the neighbourhoods should happen on a small scale to maintain the liveability of residential areas. It turns out that for the municipality of Amsterdam, the Neighbourhood Campaign, should have included about more districts of Amsterdam, even the rote ones. However, Amsterdam Marketing selected only on the neighbourhoods surrounding the city centre. A problem that they foresaw is that the neighbourhoods further away from the city centre are not popular among tourists yet, and so it is difficult to band them. Consequently, tourist would need a strong motivation to go out to these areas. As it was shown, alternative food does provide a strong motivation to leave the city centre as it complies with the visitors' desires to experience authenticity within the food experience, preferably accompanied by locals.

#### *Tourists who visit the neighbourhoods*

In their campaign, Amsterdam Marketing targets repeat visitors as they perceive them as the most likely group to leave the city centre to explore the neighbourhoods. On the other hand, the respondents involved in AFT argued that quality food experiences appeal also to first time visitors. For example, families with children are often interested in multifunctional urban agriculture sites. Then, projects on innovation and sustainability appealed to delegations and students. Finally, people interested in gardening, and foodies prefer the atmosphere of the neighbourhoods over the city centre for unique dining experiences.

#### Facilitating factors of the development of AFT in Amsterdam's neighbourhoods.

##### *Growing interest of tourists in alternative food*

Alternative food as a new theme in Amsterdam emerged out of the tourists' demand for experiences that evolve around alternative food. Tourists desire to experience authenticity by visiting niche spaces and interacting with locals, especially within their food experiences. As a result, entrepreneurs and guides notice a growing demand for experiences in alternative food. Interestingly, many ideas for experiences come from the visitors themselves. For example, the guide of urban forging tours said:

“People started to ask me to take them on walks, so I started to that. And then people started to ask for workshops, so I started to do that. So teaching about one herb at the time or how to make treatments (...)” (In-depth interview AMS 12)

Furthermore, tourism entrepreneurs observe a growing interest of visitors in getting acquainted with farmers and local food production. This relates especially to organic gardening and the making of cheese in the countryside of Amsterdam. Next to that, according to an expert on urban agriculture, people have a social need to identify with food that they eat and they use alternative food to define themselves through holiday and leisure-time choices (In-depth interview AMS 9). The bottom-up demands for AFT link to the social pressure for transparency in food production and preference for local food production. These two drivers of demand are very influential; many businesses in Amsterdam incorporate slogans of local, alternative or organic food to gain consumers' trust and interest (In-depth interview AMS 7, Observations AMS 9).

#### *Internet and Social Media*

Internet made it possible and easy to find an alternative to the mass tourism experiences in the neighbourhoods. Most of the tourism entrepreneurs in this study used social media or tourism portals to reach to potential tourists. It turns out when tourism information point is not aware of alternative food tourism experiences in the neighbourhoods, the only possibility is to promote a business on-line (Participatory observations AMS 12). For example, several entrepreneurs used blogs to discuss the issues in alternative food which often resulted in requests for tours and experiences (In-depth interview AMS 12).

#### *Recommendations and the word of mouth*

The popularity of the websites offering local food experiences came along with an entire system of rating and recommendation of these experiences by tourists. This system of evaluation is another driver of popularity of alternative food tourism. In fact, the entrepreneurs involved in tourism related that their visitors highly value recommendations by other people. Many of the alternative food tourism businesses become known to tourists by the word of mouth, recommendations or online-search of visitors. This non-organized way of accessing tourism offers becomes increasingly popular. Alternative food tourists prefer tours that are highly recommended on TripAdvisor or they book their experiences on platforms that connect them to inhabitants offering such experiences.

#### *Entrepreneurial networks*

Alternative food experiences grow in economic strength thanks to active networking of the entrepreneurs involved in alternative food tourism. Herby, alternative food tourism experiences are put together by people who are embedded in the networks of for instance food production, urban gardening or innovation in food. Therefore, entrepreneurs use their networks to connect various food initiatives to create together a unique experience for tourists. Entrepreneurial networks are created often among entrepreneurs who share a common goal (i.e. increasing awareness about the importance of urban farming) that gives them a motivation to cooperate.

#### *Financial support for alternative food entrepreneurship*

The attitude of the municipality of Amsterdam is to provide a support to citizens and entrepreneurs with innovative ideas. The financial support might include subsidies or renting land or buildings at lower than commercial rates. Many of the respondents had their initiatives or start-ups facilitated by the municipality. All in all, they appreciate the support from the municipality, as it often is a crucial factor that enables starting a new project.

#### Constraining factors of the development of AFT in Amsterdam's neighbourhoods.

The results in this sub-section present the factors that constrain the development of AFT in the neighbourhoods of Amsterdam. These obstacles are caused by both formal and informal planning practices. Here, the stakeholders explained what kind of obstacles they encounter in developing alternative food experiences for tourists. Additionally, interviewees who had an experience of participation in the process of creation of plans and lobbying to put food on the planning agenda shared their experiences.

#### *Bureaucracy*

Planning for alternative food tourism is a challenging task as it requires innovative thinking, creativity and perseverance in going against the stream of mass tourism and industrial food production. For example, facilitation of alternative food projects with tourism function by the municipality proved to be a challenging task, because of a lack of continuity in terms of person responsible for supervising alternative food projects. One of the respondents related that plans on which they agreed with municipality were repeatedly evaluated by different officers which resulted in various interpretation of the plans. According to this interviewee, the focus should be given to understanding the goals of the project instead of focusing on the regulations (In-depth interview AMS 3). Concluding, even though in many instances the municipality shows good intentions and openness, in practice the interviewees experienced that they lacked flexibility in their planning formats and regulations to facilitate their projects. In this context, several entrepreneurs explained that when they came to the municipality with innovative ideas often did they encounter enthusiasm in the first stage, followed with institutional boundaries and bureaucracy that disabled them to peruse innovative ideas. This relates especially to urban agriculture projects and alternative food initiatives that compete

with other spaces in the city with a land-use function and new approach to food production and consumption.

Furthermore, while the financial support from the municipality is available for some projects, it tends to include a complicated process of finding it and applying. This poses a significant barrier for new entrepreneurs and might act as a discouragement.

#### *Lack of municipal help that goes beyond funding*

In many instances, alternative food tourism begins as a new function of urban agriculture and food projects. Motivated by a possibility to become independent from municipal funding, they reach out to tourism. However, often initiators of such projects are not experienced entrepreneurs. That is why they said that the help they need from the municipality does not refer to extra funding but a possibility to learn how to become a financially viable initiative and how to enter the tourism market. Additionally, most of the respondents stress a need for platforms that connect various initiatives and small entrepreneurship that have tourism offerings in the neighbourhoods. Such platform could serve with knowledge and help to establish networks.

#### *Problems with entering tourism market and reaching out to tourists*

The entrepreneurs offering AFT often struggled to reach out to tourists and to find a way to get connected to the market and bigger players in tourism. Most of the entrepreneurs mostly reach to tourists through social media, Internet and own networks. For the small initiatives where tourism is a new function, organizing events is the most common form for tourism experiences. In other words, they are not set-up or organized well enough to receive tourists on a daily basis. This is why, when they get contacted on other days by individuals interested they need to refuse. Additionally, tourist information centres do not provide information about possibilities for tourism in the neighbourhoods, especially the remote ones. In fact, the participant observations revealed that the tourist office is not well-informed about the Neighbourhood Campaign and is not able to provide visitors with tips regarding alternative experiences in the neighbourhoods of Amsterdam (Participatory observations AMS 12). Consequently, visitors who come to Amsterdam might have a difficulty to arrange or learn about experiences outside the city centre.

#### *Unclear rules of participation*

It turns out that for some of the respondents, participation in the process of planning with municipality was disappointing. The obstacles during the process mostly referred to top-down structures that constrained the extent in which the stakeholders could participate. Therefore, the interviewees criticised the lack of power that they had in the process of plan creation. They attended the meetings on which plans were made but they found that the rules of collaboration were unclear. For example, one of the respondents explained that in the process of making a food policy stakeholders didn't know what they could expect and whether there were any benefits of the collaboration for them (In-depth interview AMS 10). This is why, this respondent argued that in order to have a fair planning process, the rules

and terms of collaboration need to be made clear before the process starts and the planners should be willing to not predefine the outcome. The cold feelings about collaboration also then extend to the outcomes of those plans that were deemed not ambitious. Finally, it turns out that the final documents in some instances are not even used at, a sit the case of the food policy when authorities changed and food dropped on the political agenda. The CITIES foundation argues that successful planning is more likely to occur when planners go out to people and try to understand the needs of people and the context in the neighbourhoods. The plans ought to be created together and citizens should feel empowered to create and implement projects that are meaningful for them (In-depth interview AMS 16).

## **Results case study Rome**

### Alternative Food Tourism in Rome

Rome is known for its traditional food culture and certainly is a well-established food tourism destination. The fame of Roman food is based on the appreciation for its quality and great taste. Tourists come to Rome searching for 'a real Italian food experience'. However, with the increased touristification, food offers in touristic places lost on their quality and authenticity. Interviewees argued that in the city centre of Rome the way of eating and experiencing food as in 'slow food' or in the Italian tradition is gone. They complained about the commodification of the cultural elements and exploitation of the stereotypical images such as the making of fresh pasta by old ladies. The standardisation of food offerings and their poor quality in the city centre is even noticed by tourists. Even though the search for 'the real' Italian food experience became very difficult, the demand for it keeps growing. As an answer to that, a wide range of alternative food experiences outside the touristic area were developed to offer local and authentic food experiences. Below themes of AFT in Rome are listed and explained. One should notice that these themes are interlinked and so an alternative food experience might be composed of two or more themes.

#### *Regionalism*

In Rome, the regional identity appeared often as a theme of AFT. The importance of the region in food production is very high which is why many of the local products are protected with a Denomination of Origin (PDO). Examples of PDO cheese in Rome include Pecorino and Ricotta cheese. Frequently, urban farms operate on a hybrid model meaning that they enable production and consumption. Thanks to this model, they became popular tourist attractions. For example, in Park della Cafarella, just outside the city walls, there is a Vaccarecho Cheese Farm located. On this farm, PDO certified Ricotta and Pecorino cheese are made. This farm is a family-owned business that proudly cultivates the heritage of cheese making in the area and welcomes touristic to visit the farm or taste some cheese. Because of the social importance of regional food production, alternative food tours in Rome often tell stories about it. For example, 'Top-Bike' is a company run by Dutch entrepreneurs who offers bike tours through the Appia Antica park with a stop at this farm. Furthermore, regional food is a theme of AFT that can be found at the farmers markets. One of the most successful farmer markets in Rome

is 'Campania Amica'. It was developed to help farmers sell their products in cities. It turned out that not only residents but also tourists are very interested in visiting this market. Interestingly, the market of Campania Amica it is not only a place to do groceries but also to socialize and eat (Participatory Observation RM 10). According to the manager of this market, tourists appear in an increasingly growing number, attracted by a unique atmosphere and the presence of locals and farmers.

### *Rurality*

Rome is a city that has a strong image of an urban destination. In other words, some of the respondents perceived rural experiences as not belonging to the Roman tourism. On the other hand, there are some places in Rome that do offer an experience of countryside and agriculture within the city. This includes the earlier mentioned Park della Cafarella where one can see farm houses, grazing sheep, vineyards and countryside-like landscape. Unfortunately, the countryside outside the borders of Rome is quite remote and poorly accessible. Because of that, AFT in the countryside of Rome is perceived as another destination rather than an experience of the city itself. Nevertheless, agritourism in the surroundings of Rome is very popular. For example, organization 'Terranostra' promotes holidays on farms in the Italian countryside. They argued that agritourism should belong to a countryside- not to a city- which is why they do not have any offers in Rome.

### *Health*

In Rome, the theme of health is present in the narratives about the quality of ingredients that are used for preparation of dishes. Herby, regional and organic food production was often used as a slogan in AFT to attract health-conscious tourists. The theme of health is especially emphasized at the sites of urban agriculture and restaurants. For example, 'Fattoria di Fiorano' - an estate that connects multifunctional farming and agriculture with tourism and leisure. For example, they offer meals made of ingredients from their own, organically grown garden. This estate has a large terrain on which various crops are grown and where families can picnic and children play in a healthy environment.

### *Arts and Culture*

Arts and Culture is an important theme for the AFT in Rome, especially in relation to the craftsmanship and artisanal ways of food production. In Rome, archaeological heritage and old farm buildings are often a part of stories in alternative food tourism. In fact, many of the farms and estates opened to tourism. Many respondents argued that in Rome, the connection of food and culture is very strong and unlike the mass tourism, AFT fairly represents this heritage.

### *Lifestyle*

In Rome, many of the studied alternative food experiences tried to appeal to tourists by appealing to a food-related lifestyle. Herby, lifestyle as a way of living and traveling expressed

through consumption choices is a reason to become involved in AFT. Therefore, tourists who associate themselves with values of slow food movement, or believe in the superiority of organic food are more likely to choose AFT tourism experiences over the mass food tourism. Interestingly, lifestyle as a way of traveling also played an important role in AFT. For example, cycling tourism or experiences with locals are strongly related to lifestyle.

### *Cuisine*

Cuisine as a theme stands for the gastronomic experiences that include alternative food. In Rome, alternative tourism in the theme of cuisine included especially slow food dining. Moreover, AFT was perceived as the most certain way to experience authentic food. Accordingly, tourists in Rome enjoy alternative food in the slow food restaurants or in restaurants that offer only regional food. An example from this study is a restaurant and local speciality shop 'Dol - Bottega del Gusto' (located in Centocelle-a residential neighbourhood of Rome). The alternative food theme is embraced by this restaurant not only by sourcing local ingredients and artisanal produce but also by providing all the information to people interested in the story behind the food. The owner said:

"We want to explain the story of any product that is here, so I want explain where this wine comes from, about the producers, the type of soil, grapes, anything about what people eat and drink. This is the only acceptable way for us (...) maybe it costs bit more, but it has a reason that we can explain." (In-depth interview RM 7)

Furthermore, the owner explained that celebrating food as in slow food is a core for a quality-oriented food experience:

"Here the nights are longer, music not too loud. The ambiance is connected to what you eat. The light, the music, the people are all important. We don't like to eat fast, because if you do, it is not the same thing". (In-depth interview RM 7)

### *Entertainment and Education*

In Rome, alternative food experiences often combine having fun and learning with food. For example, cooking workshops in Roman homes are highly appreciated. Next to that, alternative food tours are characterized by a rich content and designed to satisfy the curiosity of tourists. An example of a company that offers educational experiences is "Not for Tourists Rome". The owners of the company explained that their goal is to show 'the real Rome' and authentic food to the tourists interested in 'seeing more' (In-depth interview RM 9). For example, they offer a 'Street Food Tour' and a 'Real Roman Food Experience'. The last one is an informal cooking lesson in a house of a local Roman person. The owners argued that they offer a complete experience of food in Rome as it includes participation, tastings and interaction with locals.

Another educational, alternative food tours are offered by Katie Perla. This lady started her entrepreneurial activity with a blog describing issues related to food in Rome. Now she also gives food tours that tells unique stories about the not so touristic neighbourhoods and their

food culture including the one of cultural minorities. She shares her knowledge about Rome the way it really is by telling the authentic stories about food rather than romanticized and stereotypical imaginations.

Similarly, at the farmers market of Campania Amica, the core of alternative food experience lies within the possibility to talk with a farmer and learn about food from a first hand:

“They say that finally someone explains them how food was produced, suggest me some recipes, tells them everything about the product. At supermarket, you spend seconds here you spend hours. So, it is not buying, it is learning. It is not like going to a shop. You want to learn what you can cook today. You see here people who come just to buy three products and spend 3 hours.” (In-depth interview RM 5)

### *Urban agriculture*

In Rome, another way for having an AFT experience is by visiting urban agriculture projects. It is especially the farms with a hybrid model that are popular among tourists. In the park Appia Antica various examples of urban agriculture can be found. For example, eth earlier mentioned ‘Fattoria di Fiorano’ has been farming their organically for the last half of a century, with a wine and cheese being their staple products. Next to a slow food experience at a restaurant located on a farming land, they organize workshops, tastings, events and experiences of harvesting grapes or gardening. This site is especially inviting for families with children as they can play around the fields and various experiences are organized for them. In the interview, the owner of this estate said:

“We have labs for kids that are every Saturday or Sunday. It includes something with nature, landscape, food. Today we had a harvest for kids, but also for adults. Sometimes we do Pilates in the middle of vineyard or a wine courses. We also have a worker: Bruno, he takes care of the vegetable patches and he also explains people about the vegetables and growing seasons. You can also go there with him, choose your vegetables and buy them” (In-depth interview RM 2)

Secondly, in the Appia Antica there are also community gardens, allotment gardens and even care farms. For example, Hortus Urbis is project that promotes urban agriculture and offers workshops in gardening. Their unique focus is that they grow only ancient Roman plants and they do it exactly in a way ancient Romans did. Thanks to that, the garden of Hortus Urbis offers a chance to reconnect with the heritage of growing food in a city. Then, there is a care farm where community agriculture and allotment gardening takes place around a nursing home for mentality ill people. This concept was inspired by the Dutch model of ‘Zorgboerderij’. The interviewee said that they would like to further develop by offering workshops, services and own produce to tourists (In-depth interview RM 12).

Finally, the neighbourhood organization ‘Hummus Onlus’, organizes educational activities at their garden and guided tours through the Park della Cafarella. They tell stories about ancient plants, local agriculture, aqueducts and artisanal cheeses.

### Contribution of AFT to alleviating tourist pressure from the centre of Rome

In Rome, spreading of tourism to the neighbourhoods happens without interventions of municipal planners. This study found that alternative food is a strong enough motivation for tourist visiting Rome to go out of the beaten track. Respondents argued that the increased interest of people in alternative food experiences goes hand in hand with the popularity of Airbnb accommodations and other websites offering local experiences. Respondents argued that Airbnb plays a crucial role in shaping alternative food tourism. One of the entrepreneurs explained that Airbnb creates a new type of tourists who dare to go off the beaten path and have alternative experiences (In-depth interview RM 9).

On the other hand, a tourism scholar questioned whether spreading tourism to the neighbourhoods solves the problem of overcrowding at all. By using the example of Airbnb, he said:

“If you look at the map, you do see Airbnb everywhere, but then, if you calculate how much Airbnb contributes to overcrowding already touristic spaces versus how much it helps non-touristic sites, at the end it is always more the former than the latter. So it is true that some tourists go more outside of the centre than inside, but it is also true that a lot of people come to the centre. So in tourism you always speak about fixity-but tourism is about movements. So what it matters that people live outside, if only as soon as possible they take a bus to be in the centre” (In-depth interview RM 3).

This leads to show that while AFT is to a large extent developed by a self-organizational change driven by tourist demands, it is out of the reach of Roman civic society and entrepreneurs to address the problem of overcrowding in the city centre. The respondents argue that city centre will continue to suffer from the impacts of mass tourism unless the municipality takes action. One of the respondents said:

“We [residents] accept it, we have been already expelled from the city centre. So it is not our say any more.” (In-depth interview RM 3)

However, even the tourism planner from the municipality of Rome shared that he feels powerless in the confrontation with the planning power of the tourism demand. He said:

“Booking.com manages all the rooms in Rome, and so does the Airbnb. It is like a wonderful and well-organized network (...) So there is a risk that the whole tourism in a city in Rome is managed by a network of tourist and organizations outside the city itself” (In-depth interview RM 13).

### Alternative food-a reason to go off the beaten track of tourism in Rome

This study has found that tourists feel motivated to go off the beaten track of tourism in Rome to experience alternative food. Below, the reasons for the appeal of AFT to tourists compared to the experiences in the city centre are listed.

#### *Perceived lack of the authenticity in the city centre*

City centre of Rome is often described as a tourism stage or a theme park that is designed and played for tourists' entertainment. An example that one guide called is an Italian restaurant which tries to attract tourists by placing in the window two elderly women making pasta. As the respondent argued, this staged performance was aimed at targeting the tourists who have a romanticised and stereotypical image of Italy. However, in the opinion of this respondent, such representation is disrespectful to both the authentic tradition and people who make the food in the kitchen of in this restaurant -often migrants, not Italian grandmas'.

In relation to the lack of authenticity of the food experiences in the city centre, that the neighbourhoods outside the city centre are the only escape to places where real Roman life can be found. This means that the residential neighbourhoods are where the authentic experiences in food can be found. A guide explained it in the following way:

"Rome within the city walls, which is 12-miles circuit, has only 120 000 residents. The other millions of Romans live somewhere else- where they have urban gardens and local parks. So when you go to the places outside the boundaries of the touristic map you encounter actually that Rome is not the centre of Rome. Almost no one lives there, it is very pretty and has cool things in there but honestly why it has more to offer than Garbatella or Pineto?" (In-depth interview RM 8)

Herby, in the city centre food was considered by the respondents as not authentic nor of a good quality. One of the entrepreneurs offering alternative food experiences said:

"In the centre you find spaghetti with meatballs: that's something that does not exist. But foreign people like it and think that this is real Italian food, so we adapted to that wish. So you can already imagine that if you just stay in the centre you don't have a real, authentic experience." (In-depth interview RM 9)

#### *Local atmosphere of the residential neighbourhoods and Slow Food*

Similarly, the entrepreneurs offering alternative tourism experiences in Rome explained that people's attitude in the centre and in the residential neighbourhoods towards each other and tourists differ. According to these respondents, people in the residential neighbourhoods are politer and are have a deeper interest in visitors, resulting in that they are eager to give them something "extra" (In-depth interview RM 9).

Also in the residential neighbourhoods, one can find slow food and quality-oriented dining experiences. According to the respondents, local population living in Rome, was frustrated

by the low quality of food offerings in city centre and by a need to compete with tourists for space. Owner of such restaurant explained:

“Being here or in the centre changes everything. Here you can speak slow, be in a comfortable setting. There everything is fast and as a staff, you cannot spend time with people as we do here. Outside of the centre the rhythm of life and the way of life is different. We love this place for its small-size and slow life. I see people so stressed and I say: come down, take it easy. You have to find little time for your life, and time of dinner and lunch can be this kind of quality time for yourself” (In-depth interview RM 7).

#### *Possibility to experience food production*

Furthermore, with the increased popularity of artisanal farms and on-farm restaurants tourists visiting Rome feel motivated to go out of the city centre to visit these places. Interestingly, interviewed guide related that many of his tourists appreciate the fact that they were taken to a “hidden place” and discovered something that not all the tourists see. On top of that, the guide explained that when he takes his tourists to the cheese makers in the park, they enjoy foremost observing the locals pass by to buy cheese (In-depth interview RM 1).

Even though most of the alternative food attractions in this study were out of the tourism centre, authentic food experiences proved to be very effective motivation to explore different city parts. The respondents argued that in a way, alternative food appeals to various tourists, not only foodies or food explorers. Based on own experience, the entrepreneurs argued that a desire for an authentic food experience is something that many tourists seek. Even though the city does not have any campaigns promoting neighbourhoods, tourists do go out of the city centre to take part in AFT. Thanks to the advantages that the residential neighbourhoods have as a setting for AFT tourists feel encouraged to go off the beaten track in Rome. Finally, AFT in the neighbourhoods also is a source of benefits for the local communities.

#### Facilitating factors of AFT in the neighbourhoods of Rome.

Given the success of alternative tourism attractions in Rome, one can wonder what contributed to the development of alternative food projects. The respondents offering alternative food tourism shared what in their opinions influenced the popularity of their attractions.

#### *Internet and Social Media*

Social media was identified as having a powerful role in putting new places and activities in the limelight of tourism. For example, one of the respondents was a famous blogger that writes stories about alternative food in Rome and recommends places to visit. On top of that the author of this blog has also developed an app with a virtual guide. She also gives tours in Rome that focus on a discovery of the neighbourhoods and their authentic stories about Roman food culture. In the interviewee, she said:

“The blog acted as ground where new ideas were born. So now I think I have been very successful in changing the conversation about the Roman food. You still find like very glossy accounts of how people eat here, but now there is the alternative narrative, that wasn’t being told before” (In-depth interview RM 8).

The author of the blog further explained that blogging about food gave her the position of an ambassador for the local food culture in Rome. She uses the blog and her tours to promote local and artisanal food production:

“The group of people who make their flower or brew their beer, or make their wine, or age their cheese is very small. People who adhere to this type of food production or food artisanship are good at certain things but not communicating. So they may remain off the radar, simply because they cannot put a website together or renew their domain name, or have basic information available to visitors, who would need someone to tell them to go there anyway. So, because I was already working in tourism, I saw the opportunity to promote the people that were doing great things, or they offer something different than the norm” (In-depth interview RM 8)

#### *Recommendations and the word of mouth*

The importance of the recommendation, especially though the word of mouth should not be underestimated. Based on own experiences, the respondents assured that satisfied tourist, telling about their food experiences at homes, are the best source of promotion. For example, the organizer of the farmers market in Rome said:

“We became famous, without spending one Euro on promotion and advisors. It is the people who suggested to their friends to come here. It is all thanks to the word of mouth” (In-depth interview RM 5).

#### Factors that constrained AFT in the neighbourhoods of Rome.

Although alternative food has been well-established as tourist experience in the neighbourhoods of Rome, the respondents mentioned several factors that made it more difficult for them to take tourists outside the city centre. These factors are then opportunities for governmental action and implementing measures to facilitate dispersion of tourist.

#### *Lack of promotion and information by the tourism information centre*

As a first issue, the respondents complained about a lack centralized tourism promotion by the tourist office. Herby, the entrepreneurs in alternative food business argued that the tourist information points have a strong influence on tourist flows and contributes to that some places remain out of the tourist routes. Accordingly, the materials provided by the tourism office, especially the tourism map that almost every tourist owns, in a way frame the touristic areas. This has been observed and explained by the alternative tourism agency in the following way:

“These maps are for tourists everything they see, so for them this is whole Rome! So you have to image, tourist get this map, and so they imagination of Rome and what they can do there, is there. So if you ask yourself why all people stay in the centre, you have to start with this map. Because the relevance of other places is never communicated in first place.” (In-depth interview RM 9)

Because of that, even though some of the attractions in alternative food in Rome are not even far away from the city centre, yet they remained out of the tourist track as they were not promoted or included on the touristic map. This was a case for the Appia Antica Park. During the participatory observations at the tourist office I confirmed that the officers do not provide any materials about the park and its activities, nor did they encourage to visit the residential areas when asked (Participatory Observation RM 3).

#### *Malfunctioning public transportation*

Tourist do need a strong motivation to go out to the neighbourhoods further away. Ever though alternative food is a very appealing attraction for tourist in Rome, the respondents argued that they still can be discouraged when encountering problems with transportation or high increase in additional costs. The problem of accessibility however is to be tackled by the government. The respondents jointly argued that solving issues with transportations will enable tourists to discover the city in a new way and encourage them to explore places outside the beaten track. This can be executed by improvements in the public transportation and developing new cycling routes.

#### *Lack of official planning and collaboration*

In Rome, the development of alternative food tourism occurs organically, established by citizens and entrepreneurs to answer the demand of tourists. In Rome, bottom up projects are often not coordinated with the official plans which tends to lead to a planning chaos and conflicts. Next to that, a lack of dialogue and strong organizational values of the stakeholders involved in managing tourism in Rome caused that collaboration efforts are limited and inefficient. A lack of coordination from the site of the government leads to unequal distribution of power which often tends to concrete in the hands of the real estate lobby group (In-depth interview RM 3). Disappointed in the way the city is governed, the respondents argued that the city could use its potential of tourism, including alternative food, in the presence of well-functioning government. Interestingly, the respondents argued that the local government should have more decisive power to assure continuity of plans and to speed up decision-making process. The government should also should have the means and power to protect the sustainability agenda of the city to protect it from economic exploitation.

## CHAPTER 6: COMPARATIVE CHAPTER

### Contribution to tourism literature

Findings of this study contribute with knowledge about the role of alternative food in city tourism. Even though alternative food is a buzzword, its role within the city tourism has not been considered. In particular, the most profound gap in knowledge considers the recreational use of urban agriculture. According to (Lovell, 2010) it was not known how areas of urban agriculture could be used for tourism and how to define it. This study fills this gap by conceptualising Alternative Food Tourism and complementing the literature on food tourism.

Accordingly, I argue that exploration of niche spaces (Albrecht, 2011) plays an important role in alternative food tourism in city. In both cities, alternative food attractions tend to be located in niche or hidden from mass tourism places. Interestingly, tourists appreciate remote spaces as they allow for exclusivity and uniqueness. Hereby, alternative food is a reason to explore the food attractions hidden from mass tourism. In this way, I argue in line with Laing & Frost (2015, p.181). that alternative food tourist is driven by a search of “authenticity, ego to experience something new and sustainability standards”. Because of that, tourists seeking alternative food experiences are more likely to go out to the neighbourhoods to escape from mass tourism. Alternative food tourists enjoy observing residents and search for a chance to interact with them. Given the importance authenticity within a food experience, alternative food tourism guides employ stories that reflect local identity. Summing up, the main characteristics of alternative food tourism are:

- AFT includes places that are meaningful to residents
- AFT does not exploit the stereotypical image of food culture
- AFT provides economic impulse to the local initiatives and SME's
- AFT provides incentive to cultivate local food traditions
- AFT offers a meaningful interaction with 'locals'
- AFT is follows the principles of slow tourism (i.e. cycling holidays)
- AFT includes only quality food that can be considered alternative by its superiority to the mass-produced foods

### New framework to study Alternative Food Tourism

Alternative food is a new type of food tourism. Alternative food tourism distinguishes itself from the mainstream food tourism in a city by giving an implicit focus to the meaningfulness of a food experience. In both cases studies, alternative food experiences are characterized by focus on authenticity and a unique place-based story. Mason & O'Mahony (2007) proposed a framework to study food experiences. As they argued, this framework can also serve for promoting a place-based tourism based on a local food heritage. The authors suggested six possible themes of the culinary tourist. The illustration below presents their framework:

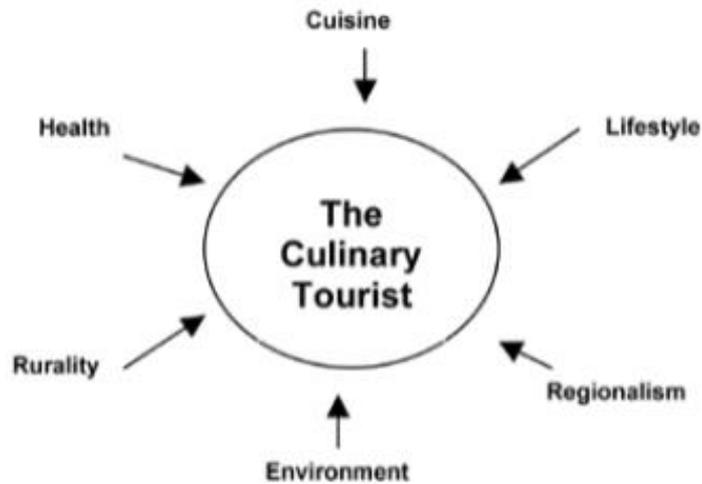


Fig. 9 Possible themes of the culinary tourist (Mason & O'Mahoney, 2007)

In this study, I applied this framework to study the alternative food tourism experiences in Amsterdam and Rome. However, based on my data, I identified several new themes that are particular for alternative food tourism. The illustration below shows a new framework that I created, using the framework by Mason & Mahoney (2007) as a starting point and complementing it with the themes discovered in this study.

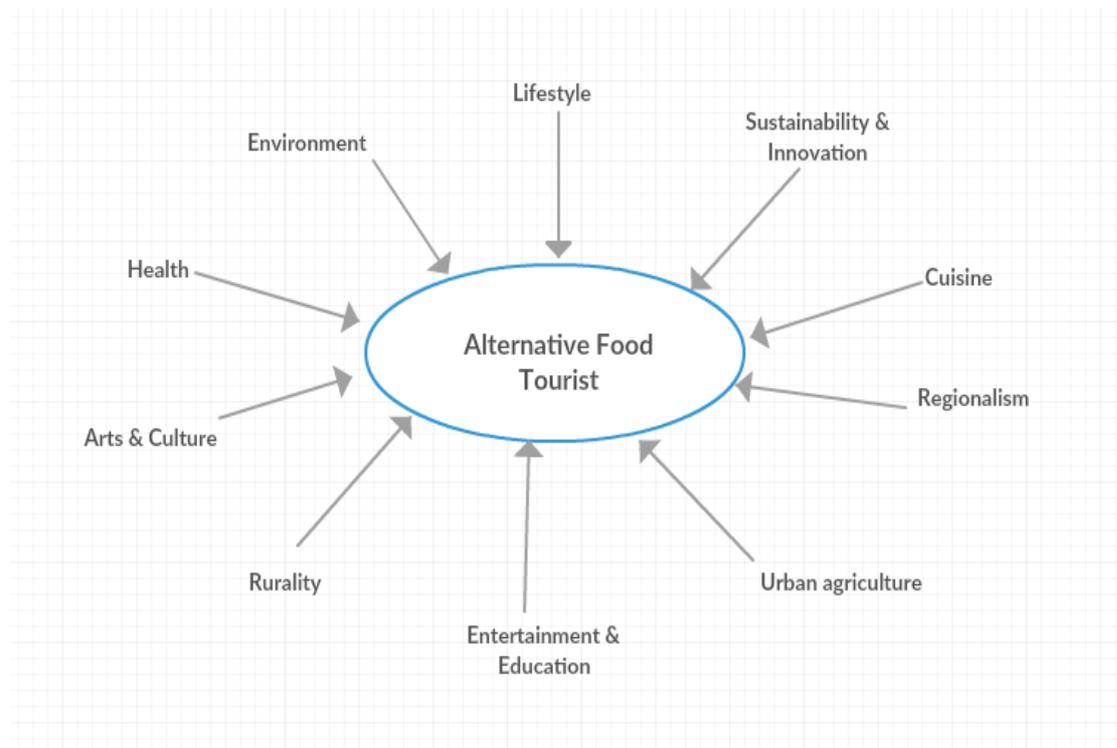


Figure 10: Possible themes of the alternative food tourist (in the urban context)

Looking both figures one can notice in the framework alternative food tourism four new

themes are added. The new themes are: Sustainability & Innovation, Urban agriculture, Entertainment & Learning and Arts & Culture. In the next sections, all the theses will be elaborated and compared between cases.

A comparison between Amsterdam and Rome regarding the interpretation and importance of the possible themes of AFT

In both cities, AFT is relatively well-established type of tourism in the neighbourhoods. Even though each case has its unique context which makes a strict comparison impossible, a few discrepancies has been noticed in relation to the importance and interpretation of possible themes of AFT. In order to illustrate this difference, the themes have been fist rated and then plotted together in a spin diagram. I used a Likert scale of 1 to 5, where the numbers represented the importance of each theme:

- 5= Very Important
- 4= Important
- 3=Moderately Important
- 2= Slightly Important
- 1= Not Important

The table below shows the scores for all the themes in Amsterdam and Rome.

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Amsterdam</b>	<b>Rome</b>
Regionalism	3	5
Rurality	4	2
Health	4	4
Arts & Culture	3	4
Entertainment & Education	4	2
Urban agriculture	5	2
Sustainability and innovation	4	2
Cuisine	3	5
Lifestyle	4	4
Environment	3	5

Then, the results from above were plotted in the diagram below to illustrate the difference.

## Themes of alternative food tourism

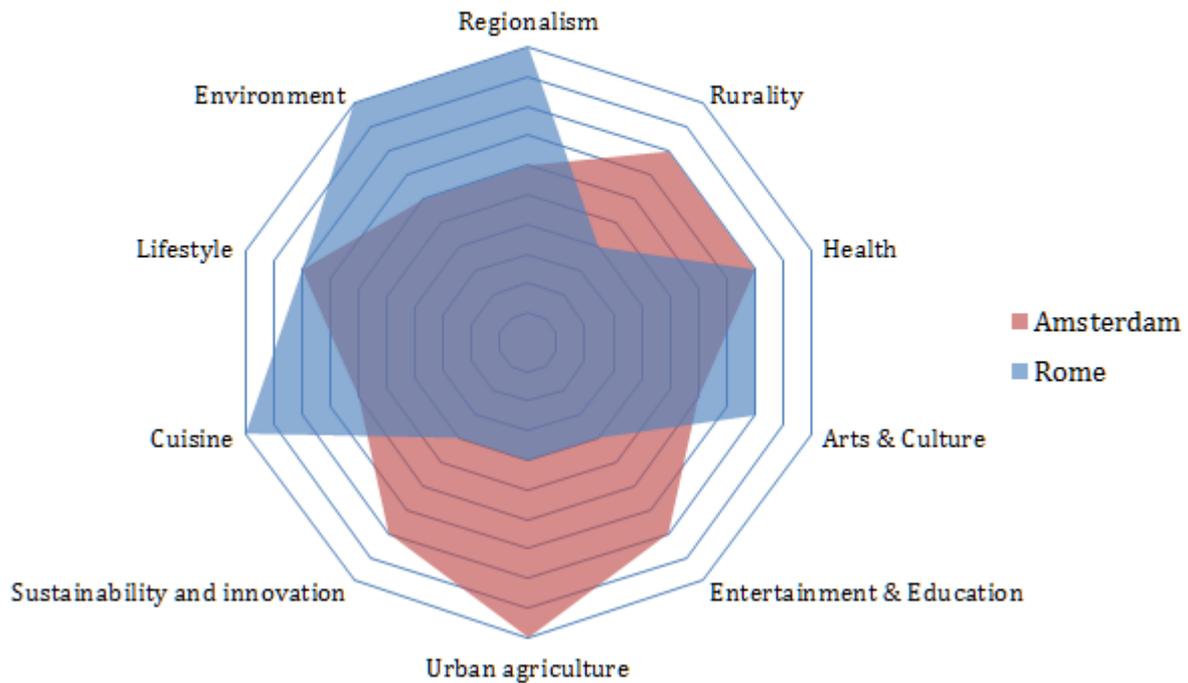


Fig. 11 Themes of AFT in a spin-web diagram

Importantly, the numbers do not represent actual value but they serve as an indication on the extent to which themes were evaluated. Finally, all these themes are interrelated and all together they create a unique combination of alternative food tourism in each city. Below, the themes are described and the argumentation for evaluation of their importance is provided.

### *Regionalism*

‘Regionalism’ relates to the importance of the regional identity in alternative food tourism in each city. In case of Amsterdam, the region refers to the Amsterdam Metropolitan Region, or the province of Noord Holland. Therefore, this theme is moderately important in Amsterdam's alternative food tourism. One of the examples found in this study is the ‘Old Amsterdam Milk Tour’ which tells stories about the tradition of milk production in the region and how it was brought to the city. In Rome on the other hand, the region of Rome is very important in relation to alternative food. This can be illustrated by the importance of products with denomination of origin. For example, in Rome farms that produced local pecorino and ricotta cheese are a big tourist attraction and regional food production is an inspiration for tourism stories in most of the studied experiences.

### *Rurality*

'Rurality' is a theme in alternative food tourism in the transition areas of Amsterdam and Rome and their countryside. In Amsterdam, I concluded that rurality was an important theme thanks to the popularity of countryside tours. As in Amsterdam the distance from the city center to the countryside is much smaller than in Rome, the transition from city to the rural areas is much faster, also thanks to the network of cycling lines. In Rome on the other hand, it would take around 1,5 hours to cycle from the center of Rome outside the peripheries, which are very large, residential or industrial areas. With the exception on the park Appia Antica, Rome is not very well connected with its countryside compared to Amsterdam. Consequently, rurality was just slightly important theme in alternative food tourism in Rome.

### *Health*

'Health' as a theme in alternative food tourism is important in both cities. This importance has been evaluated based on the increased attention paid by alternative food tourists on the healthiness of the food products determined especially by the way of production. Furthermore, the importance of healthiness was observed in the cycling as a common modality in alternative food tours. Finally, alternative food tourism often included visit in green spaces and salutogenic environments.

### *Arts & Culture*

'Arts and Culture' is a theme that appeared as important in Rome, especially in relation to the craftsmanship and artisanal ways of food production. Additionally, in Rome archaeological heritage and old farm buildings were often part of the stories in alternative food tourism. This theme was moderately important in Amsterdam, as it was not often part of alternative food stories. Nevertheless, some entrepreneurs in Amsterdam start to explore the possibility of connecting alternative food tourism with the cultural heritage of Amsterdam, which may indicate that this theme will become more important in the future.

### *Entertainment and Education*

'Entertainment and Education' covers for the importance of having fun and gaining knowledge. I concluded that education appears as an important theme in Amsterdam's alternative food and in Rome just slightly important. Thus, even though, in Rome cooking workshops were a popular tourist activity, tours and experiences with a purpose of a knowledge transfer were hardly an experience on its own. On the other hand, in Amsterdam, alternative food tours had more often a form of educational tours.

### *Urban agriculture*

'Urban agriculture' as in community gardening and allotment gardens, guerilla gardening was a very important part of alternative food tourism in Amsterdam. In fact, tours of

community gardens or urban foraging tours were only found in Amsterdam. While this form of urban agriculture is also present in Rome, it is less often part of tours and tourist activities, which is why I conclude that it was slightly important.

#### *Sustainability and innovation*

'Sustainability and innovation' was identified as a new theme as experiences of alternative food were often organized around a narrative of sustainable food production or pioneering solutions in food production in cities. It was important in Amsterdam and slightly important in Rome. In fact, Amsterdam has many food projects that focus on aspects such as food waste, environmental pollution, green city, circular economy etc. whereas in Rome, it was hardly mentioned in the context of tours and projects that tourists would visit.

#### *Cuisine*

'Cuisine' as a theme representing the focus on tasting local dishes and produce was a very important theme in alternative food tourism in Rome. Thanks to the fame of Roman cuisine around the world, alternative food tourism was often a way to find authentic and traditional food places. In Amsterdam, cuisine is also an important tourist motivation in Amsterdam, but less in the context of alternative food tourism, which was often not including consumption at all, whereas in Rome it was less often a case.

#### *Lifestyle*

'Lifestyle' is a theme that represented tourists' beliefs, values in relation to their consumption choices in alternative food tourism, both on individual level and as a societal trend. For example, vegetarianism is a food-related lifestyle that influences the popularity of alternative food tourism in both capitals. All in all, people's food-related and tourism-related lifestyle were equally important for alternative food tourism in both capitals.

#### *Environment*

Environment is a theme that stands for the role of nature within the food tourism experience. In this way, the setting for alternative food tourism can range from one that does not include any elements of natural environment vs a one that is considered natural and so includes little human interventions. Especially in Rome, most of the alternative food tourism took place within the Appia Antica Park which is considered a pure area, where natural lands are mixed with small-scale organic agriculture and farming. As a result, in Rome environment was very important, as for many alternative food tourism was equal with an escape from a built-up area. In Amsterdam on the other hand, nature was moderately important as it was emphasised only in the countryside tours. Within the city, urban agriculture offered the escape to a green environment, however, it can be argued that agriculture is not a natural area.

### A comparison between the cases regarding factors that facilitated the development of AFT in cities' neighbourhoods.

In both cities, the development of alternative food fosters tourism is influenced by a broad range of factors that stimulated the popularity of alternative food theme. Interestingly, in both cities similar factors have been identified.

#### *Social media and Internet*

Social media and Internet has in both cities a vast role in increasing the popularity of alternative food attractions. Accordingly, in Amsterdam, Internet websites and online platforms were a common medium through which tourists could find out about the upcoming experiences. In Rome, especially blogs have a large effect on a popularity of alternative food attractions. In fact, blogging about alternative food in Rome was a way to connect visitors with local producers and food attractions in Rome. In this way, the case of Rome showed that even one blogger can contribute to a boom of a tourism attraction (the case of 'Campania Amica' market and Katie Perla blog). Next to that, in both cities the importance of recommendation as a way of diffusing the popularity of alternative food theme has been equally stressed. This referred to the word of mouth as well as the rating system of the experiences available on Internet.

Finally, in Amsterdam, other factors that facilitate the development of alternative food tourism are entrepreneurial networks. It turned out that in Amsterdam informal collaborations or partnerships were a way to achieve a common goal of organizing a tourism attraction in theme of alternative food. Additionally, these collaborations were often grounded in similar values in relation to food production. On the other hand, in Rome, collaborations were much less frequent. In fact, most of the entrepreneurs worked on their own, especially considering the lack of support from local government. Consequently, in Amsterdam, has more potential for alternative food tourism development, also thanks to a financial support for alternative food entrepreneurship.

### A comparison between the cases regarding factors that constrained the development of AFT in cities' neighbourhoods.

In both case studies, alternative food tourism did develop relatively well in the neighbourhoods, however, the results from both cities show that much more can be achieved if arenas for collaboration with planners are present. Additionally, the case of Rome has illustrated the importance of an organized and official planning in order to assure equity. Furthermore, the lessons from Rome include a need for investments in city-making to facilitate spreading tourism. For example, in Rome problems with public transportation and cycling lines need to be solved. In relation to that, Amsterdam can be regarded as perfect city to achieve tourism dispersion in the theme of alternative food as the city districts are very well connected by public transport and cycling is not only easy but it also a tourist experience on its own.

Furthermore, a need for collaboration on tourism issues and citizen empowerment is crucial. Nevertheless, in the case of Rome none of the respondents had experience of collaboration. On top of that, they were highly sceptical about having ever a possibility to contribute to meaningful plans in Rome. In Amsterdam however, the respondents felt empowered to do so and so did they have an experience of collaboration in the past. Based on that, they argued that Amsterdam needs to overcome institutional boundaries within the municipality and deal with bureaucracy. On top of that, they not only seek financial support from municipality but also a possibility to gain knowledge on entrepreneurial skills.

## **CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION**

In this chapter I pay attention to the limitations of my research and I discuss the possibilities for future research.

Given the limited time slot of this study, the fieldwork included a selection of what alternative food tourism in Amsterdam and Rome entails. I did my utmost to assure representativeness and gathered qualitative accounts about how AFT fosters tourism dispersion. Therefore, the results are based on the perceptions of the stakeholders in relation to AFT which is why the characteristics of AFT in Rome and Amsterdam might not be the same across different cases. However, I argue that the rich content and contextual explanations provide helpful explanations about the nature of AFT in cities and its potential for alleviating tourism from city centres.

Considering the qualitative approach, this study has managed to only explore what AFT entails and how it develops rather than quantitative information on the extent to which alternative food tourism contributes to tourism dispersion in each city. Consequently, there is a need for a future research that would analyse this contribution, especially if AFT is to be a theme in the dispersion strategy of Amsterdam. Next to that, a more elaborate evaluation of the impacts of AFT on the neighbourhoods and participating projects could take place in the peruse of achieving sustainable outcomes. Additionally, another case study could be carried out within the city of Amsterdam in order to compare the contribution of AFT to spreading tourism in relation to other type of tourism that could be performed in the neighbourhoods. This could also include assessment of various types of tourism against each other and against sustainability criteria. Furthermore, future research could investigate in-depth the perceptions of tourists in relation to their satisfaction from tourism experiences in the neighbourhoods compared to the experiences in the city centre. This is to explore the eagerness of tourists go out of the city centre. Finally, there is a need to investigate the impacts of Airbnb on tourism dispersion. Such analysis should include not only the accommodations offered at Airbnb website but also in combination with the recently launched service of experiences with locals.

## CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

After investigating the potential of alternative food tourism, I conclude that alternative food tourism does foster tourism dispersion in cities. Namely, in Rome alternative food tourism is already a well-established tourism attraction that motivates tourists to go out to the neighbourhoods of Rome. Similarly, in Amsterdam AFT was found to be on a growing demand, especially in combination with cycling. The contribution of alternative food tourism to spreading tourists across the city is present through the big range and the number of experiences that are offered in alternative food tourism. Furthermore, the popularity of alternative food tourism in the neighbourhoods grows with the hype of local experiences offered by big companies such as 'Airbnb', 'Withlocals' or 'Eathwith'. Many of the experiences offered on these websites evolve around the theme of food. In this context, tourism offered by locals is a powerful driver of self-organizing change in the alternative food tourism sector and it affects the spatial distribution of tourists. Here the role of the residents as host and guides has an enormous influence on where tourists stay overnight and the activities that they do during day. The spread of tourists in Amsterdam can become even more significant next year when Airbnb launches the services of 'experiences' next year.

Studying AFT in Rome and Amsterdam allowed me to propose a new framework with possible themes for AFT in cities (Fig. 10 pp. 44). This framework can be considered a building block on the framework of a possible themes of culinary tourist proposed by Mason & O'Mahoney (2007). Furthermore, a contribution to the literature on the future demands in food tourism was made by conceptualizing AFT in the context of food tourism. This framework can serve as a source of inspiration for city planners and as a theoretical framework for a future research. Based on the characteristics of AFT, I argue that alternative food can be considered a suitable theme for tourism dispersion strategy in Amsterdam.

Furthermore, this study provided context specific explanations regarding how alternative food tourism developed in the neighbourhoods of both cities. I found that alternative food tourism emerged mainly as a result of a demand and a deep interest of tourists in alternative food and authentic experiences at a local scale. In this way, the development of alternative food tourism in the neighbourhoods of Amsterdam and Rome is driven by self-organisation of the market actors and civil initiatives in alternative food. Similarly, the popularity of Airbnb accommodations and experiences with locals is an important driver of the popularity of alternative food tourism. This process of self-organization is facilitated by Internet and social media which enables communication with and between tourists. Herby, recommendation and the word of mouth is an important factor that influences the popularity of alternative food tourism in the cities' neighbourhoods. Finally, in Amsterdam, entrepreneurial networks are an important factor that enables informal collaboration in the process of development of alternative food tours and experiences.

With a motivation for a practical relevance of this study, I presented in-depth findings about alternative food tourism in Amsterdam and Rome. Supported by the findings from both capitals, this study ends with practical recommendations for the city of Amsterdam regarding the use of the potential of alternative food theme in the dispersion strategy.

Therefore, building upon the existing 'Neighbourhood Campaign' (2016) and the municipal goals of dispersion and liveability (as in the 'Stad van Balans', 2016), the following

recommendations for the policy makers and planners in Amsterdam. These tailor-made recommendations can also be considered as inspiration for other cities.

1. The role of tourist office needs to be carefully considered. As this study showed, tourist offices have a vast impact on tourist flows, especially through the maps that they provide. In this way, by portraying only the city centre, the touristic map automatically excludes the remaining city neighbourhoods from the tourist routes. Consequently, new touristic materials are needed that would include the neighbourhoods and information about the activities. On top of that, as this study indicated, tourist information could play an active role in connecting tourist to the experiences in the neighbourhoods by being well informed to provide relevant information.
2. Spreading tourists around the city should not generate more traffic to the city centre. That is why, alternative food tourism should include both activities and tourist accommodations in the neighbourhoods so that a complete tourism 'packages' are available. Here a connection to Airbnb can be made as it contributes to spreading tourist accommodations around the city. Therefore, the role of Airbnb in tourist distribution should be accounted for in the tourism dispersion plans. All in all, managing tourism flows is only possible to some extent, which is why there is a need to account for self-organization of the tourism industry. As this study showed, tourists flow and demands are highly unpredictable and a subject to fashion. In this way, rapid changes can emerge and even reorganize the entire industry, without planners control.
3. When using alternative food tourism as a theme in tourism dispersion strategy, one should abandon thinking in terms of tourist categories. In other words, the focus should not only be on food tourist or repeat visitors, as alternative food tourism appeals to a wide range of visitors, regardless of the number of their visit.
4. Tourism dispersion strategy should not only account for the needs of visitors but also of inhabitants of Amsterdam. The reason is that they are not only residents but also hosts or leisure makers within the city as well. Consequently, their recreational needs also need to be considered.
5. Include more neighbourhoods in the tourism dispersion strategy. This study showed an explored potential of multifunctional urban agriculture (i.e. Tuinen van West) and other alternative food places and experiences in the more remote neighbourhoods of Amsterdam. Herby, the relevance of accommodations in combination with activities can be considered as a way of intensifying tourism dispersion in Amsterdam.
6. Planning for tourism dispersion should ideally take a form of an open to all the stakeholders process of collaboration. The stakeholders should be invited to collaborate and feel empowered to contribute to the dispersion through their projects from bottom up.

7. Fostering creative partnerships between big tourism players (i.e. museums) and entrepreneurs in alternative food can help to diversify the offer and spread tourists. The outcome of such partnership could include tours in the theme of wide plants in Amsterdam that appear on the famous Dutch paintings or cooking workshops of Amsterdam's dishes from the Golden Age.
8. A medium to facilitate alternative food tourism could take a form of an online platform that connects stakeholders and provides them with advice and information. This idea was put forward by the respondents involved in alternative food tourism themselves mostly out of an interest in entering tourism market and acquiring relevant knowledge.

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